

Dear Parent,

Stronger relationships between you and your children, fun ways to spend quality time together, reinforcement of strong family values...MCA Adventure Guides is a parent-child program for elementary age kids that strives to accomplish all of this and more. Designed to help foster a lifetime of understanding and companionship, YMCA Adventure Guides lives up to its motto "Friends Forever."



As "Y Guides" and "Y Explorers," parents and kids have fun adventures that promote learning and mutual understanding. From small group "circle" meetings to "expedition" events like camping, pinewood derby, can food drive, bowling, and ball games, the bond between parent and child grows.

The immediate gain is sizable – spending time together – but the long-term gains will prove to be even more significant!

Why does the YMCA Adventure Guides program exist?

During their elementary school years, children learn rapidly, becoming much more aware of the world around them. They begin to see things differently and ask questions about who they are, where they came from, and why things are as they are. During this time, children tend to see their parents as guides, teachers, and heroes. They start to understand that parents protect and nurture them. Ideally, during this period, we learn how to talk with our children more than at them. A strong relationship is based on our ability to ask open-ended questions that help our children think and move beyond simple yes or no responses. During these years, we strive to invite our children to accept challenges and opportunities, celebrate accomplishments, and face fears.

The YMCA Adventure Guides program is designed to assist you and your children on your journey of discovery. While activities with the whole family are important, we see tremendous value in supporting and strengthening the ability of a parent and his or her children to communicate at an early age in ways that are caring, honest, respectful, and responsible. We seek to encourage you as a parent to "get to know your kid while your kid is still a kid."

What do Adventure Guide participants do?

Your local YMCA will assign you to a small group called a Circle who meet on a regular basis in each others' homes, usually monthly. Each month, several Circles come together to participate in larger activities such as campouts, parties, or parades. These outings are called Expeditions. The core of the YMCA Adventure Guides program is these Circle and Expedition meetings and adventures.

Who participates in YMCA Adventure Guides?

The YMCA Adventure Guides program is for parents or other significant adults in children's lives and their elementary age children through sixth grade. An adult and child must attend program activities together. In YMCA Adventure Guides, the parent is the Guide, and the child is the Explorer. Historically, YMCA Adventure Guides has appealed most to fathers and sons or fathers and daughters. However, any parent who desires a strong bond with their child is welcome to participate. In addition, many of the Expedition events (e.g., camping) are enjoyed by the entire family.



While sponsored by the YMCA, the Adventure Guides program is open to the entire community regardless of membership in the YMCA and is run through parent volunteers who lead the Circles and the Expedition.

What does the logo represent?

The program focus is the adventures of a parent and child and of their Circles and Expeditions. At the forefront of the program are the Compass Points, which give members a sense of direction and an inspiration for activities. These points are broad enough in scope to allow for variety and creativity in designing activities.



The four main direction points on the compass are the essential components of the program.

- The **Family** is True North—the focal point of the program.
- **Nature** and the camping experience are integral parts of the program.
- The spirit of the program is experienced through belonging to a small **Community**, called a Circle.
- **Fun** is the magic of the program.

The YMCA Core Values of **cares, honesty, respect, and responsibility** make up the other directional points. Along the journey, adults should model, teach, and demonstrate these values as well as give children many opportunities to practice and celebrate them. Adults should also point out and discuss with children any behavior that is inconsistent with these values. Initially, these four values provide guidance in helping children select activities, make decisions, and choose appropriate courses of action—both in the program and in their lives. As children grow, these values become their own internal compass.

What does the program cost?

The annual membership fee is \$40 for parent and one child, \$50 for parent and two or more children. This fee includes a subscription to the "Buckskin Scroll" newsletter, a one week free family membership at the YMCA, and allows us to keep our participation fees for Expedition events to a minimum. Program t-shirts and compasses, as well as a member's manual are also provided to new members. In addition, for some Expedition activities throughout the year, a small participation fee may be required to help cover the cost of the event (e.g., pizza, bowling, camp site rental, etc.).

However, since the main goal of the program is to bring children and their parents closer together, we don't want to exclude families that feel they cannot afford the membership fee. Please let us know if this is an issue and the membership fee will be waived.

Where can I get more information?

We would love to tell you more about the program and answer any questions! Our fall registration event (see enclosed flyer) is Sunday September 9th at the Miller Park Zoo from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Members will be on hand to answer any questions. However, feel free to call the YMCA at 827-6233 anytime for more information. New members are also welcomed to join throughout the program year!

In addition, you can visit our program web site at http://www.bnymca.org/adventure_guides.php. It contains recent newsletters, event photos, program information, and contact numbers.

Program Year – Circle and Expedition Activities

- **August**
 - Circle “kickoff” meeting (New or potential member, meet and greet)
- **September**
 - Bloomington/Normal Labor Day parade – Monday, September 3rd (9:30 am)
 - Membership kick off event at the Miller Park Zoo – Sunday, September 9th (1-3pm)
 - Fall Campout at Comlara Park – Saturday, September 22nd
 - No Circle meeting
- **October**
 - Harvest Fest (wiener roast, pumpkin carving) – Sunday, October 21st
 - Circle meeting
- **November**
 - Canned food drive & fun activity (swimming) – Sunday, November 11th
 - Circle meeting
- **December**
 - March in Bloomington-Normal Jaycees Christmas parade, then to Children’s Discovery Museum for pizza party and fun – Saturday, December 1st
 - Circle meeting
- **January**
 - Adventure Camp-in at YMCA – Saturday, January 5th
 - Circle meeting
- **February**
 - Pinewood Derby Time Trials at the Y – free swimming afterwards – Sunday, February 17th
 - Pinewood Derby Race at the Y – free swimming afterwards – Sunday, February 24th
 - No Circle meeting
- **March**
 - “Wildcard” event (Bowling, swimming, ball game, your idea here!) – Sunday, March 2nd
 - Circle meeting
- **April**
 - Explore the Wildlife Prairie Park in Peoria or Wild Card Event – Sunday, April 13th
 - Circle meeting
- **May**
 - Campout at Comlara Park – Saturday, May 17th
 - Circle meeting