



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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ADVENTURE GUIDES
BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL YMCA



LOOKING FOR AN ADVENTURE?

YMCA Adventure Guides is a parent-child program for elementary aged kids. This program is designed to help foster a lifetime of understanding, companionship and it strengthens the relationship between child and parent.

As part of the YMCA Adventure Guides program, parents and kids explore adventures in fun, 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 sizeable—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 the way 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?

The Bloomington-Normal YMCA will assign you to a small group of parent-child pairs called a *Circle* who meet on a regular basis in each others’ homes, usually biweekly or monthly. Each month, the 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.

HOW ARE CIRCLES FORMED?

Circles are usually made up of 6 to 9 parents and their children. While new members are assigned a Circle based on a variety of factors, the program always gives priority to keeping friends together and accommodating meeting night constraints.

WHAT IS THE PROGRAM FOCUS OF THE ADVENTURE GUIDES?

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 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 **caring, 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.

The compass points allow you and your Circle members to personalize rituals, activities and events. You can develop Compass Point activities relevant to your own town and your own common experiences. For example, a group in Texas may build a theme around Texas explorers and pioneers, while a group on the coast may use a scuba or water exploration theme. In each case family, fun, nature and community might take on a slightly different meaning.

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 the 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 are enjoyed by the entire family.

WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM COST?

The YMCA Adventure Guides program is **FREE** for anyone who holds a family membership to the YMCA. Prospective Members of the YMCA pay an annual fee of \$80 for the program. Participants will receive a quarterly newsletter called the "Buckskin Scroll," program T-shirts and access to all Circle and Expedition events that are held. There will be no additional costs for Adventure Guides participants who participate in events that are associated with this program. Financial assistance is available to Prospective Members if they should feel that they cannot afford the fee.

HOW DID THIS PROGRAM COME TO BE?

The YMCA Adventure Guide program is an evolution of the original YMCA parent-child program called Indian Guides. The father and son Y-Indian Guide program was developed in 1926 to support the father's vital family role as a teacher, counselor and friend to his son. Harold S. Keltner, a YMCA director in St. Louis, initiated this program around a blazing campfire while he was on a hunting trip in Canada with this friend, Joe Friday, an Ojibwa Indian. Friday told him, "The Indian father raises his son. He teaches his to hunt, track, and fish, walk softly and silently in the forest, know the meaning and purpose of life and all he must know, while the white man allows the mother to raise his son." These words struck a cord for Keltner, and he arranged for Joe Friday to work with him at the St. Louis YMCA.

After World War II, the rise in YMCAs that served the whole family, the need for supporting young girls in their personal growth and the demonstrated success of the father-son program nurtured the development of other parent-child programs. A mother-daughter program, called Y-Indian Maidens, was established in South Bend, Indiana in 1951. Three years later, father-daughter groups called Y-Indian Princesses, emerged in the Fresno YMCA of California. In 1980, YMCA of the USA recognized the Y-Indian Braves program for mothers and sons, thus completing the four programs and combinations that made up the Y-Indian Guide program.

For 75 years, the program was the cornerstone for family programs in YMCA's across the country. But it is a different world today than it was in 1926. Native Americans and other citizens expressed concern over program participants' adopting the Indian culture and teaching children about Native American life in ways they deemed inaccurate or stereotypical. The YMCA's commitment to being a caring, honest, respectful and responsible organization; changing demographics resulting in diverse communities and diverse family structures; an evolving cultural sensitivity and better understanding of Native American history all prompted YMCA's across the country to re-evaluate their parent-child programs.

One of the strengths of YMCAs both locally and nationally is that they have adapted and responded to societal changes in order to remain relevant and useful to their communities. From late 2000 to mid 2003, YMCA staff and volunteers from across the country met on several occasions to craft a parent-child program that had broader appeal. In the summer and fall of 2003, YMCA Adventure Guides was launched in YMCA communities everywhere.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

We would love to tell you more about the program and answer any questions. You may contact Doug Miller at the YMCA at (309) 827-6233 or dougml@bnymca.org. You may also visit the Bloomington-Normal YMCA website at www.bnymca.org.

YMCA ADVENTURE GUIDES PROGRAM DETAILS

OBJECTIVES

- Foster companionship and understanding and set a foundation for positive, lifelong relationships between parent and child.
- Build a sense of self-esteem and personal worth.
- Expand awareness of spirit, mind and body.
- Provide a framework to meet a mutual need of spending enjoyable, constructive and quality time together.
- Enhance the quality of family time.
- Emphasize the vital role that parents play in the growth and development of their children.
- Offer an important and unique opportunity to develop and enjoy volunteer leadership skills.

PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

- To foster understanding and companionship between parent and child.

THE YMCA ADVENTURE GUIDES PROGRAM AIMS TO...

- Be clean in body and pure in heart.
- Be friends forever with my dad/mom/son/daughter.
- Love the sacred circle of my family.
- Listen to others speak.
- Love my neighbor as myself.
- Respect the traditions and beliefs of all people.
- See and preserve the beauty of Our Creator's work in forest, field and stream.

THE YMCA ADVENTURE GUIDES MOTO:

- **FRIENDS FOREVER**

THE YMCA ADVENTURE GUIDES PLEDGE:

We, YMCA Adventure Guides/Explorers, through friendly service to each other, to our family, to this Circle/Expedition and to our community, seek a world pleasing to the eye of Our Creator.