

To members of the Vision 2012 Committee

Sent: Thursday, October 07, 2010 7:22 AM

Subject: Camp Concerns

#1

Hello All!

I needed to share this with all of you.

My service unit has held gone camping every 2 years for probably the last 15 years. (or more) It is one of the most anticipated events. If it were not for this trip, many, MANY girls and adults would never experience camp.

We have always camped at Crowel/Hilaka. It was bitter-sweet that the announcement about property closings came just 72 hours after our 2009 Unit trip. Spring 2011 would be the time to camp again, and Crowel/Hilaka, with its site selection restricted, cannot accommodate our group. (likely 300+ girls, 75+ > adults. Our unit's camping trip organizer researched nearby Ledgewood, but found that using the amenities such as the climbing area, canoes and pool, were cost prohibitive for our group. As a result, the organizers are looking at leaving Girl Scout property all together.

As a member of the Vision committee, I cannot tell you how this announcement pained me. All that this committee been working towards is to use our properties effectively for girls.....and yet, in my own situation, a huge group of girls are potentially not going to have that experience. So I bring this to the committee's attention....so that we can realize the real-life situations that are not addressed in terms of camping at GSNEO camps. These are the situations that the membership are experiencing, and these are the situations that are upsetting and angering the membership. These are the REAL situations that I believe the committee must address to move the camp properties forward.

The leadership and the memories the girls formed are what it's all about. And even at Crowell Hilaka, with the mouse-infested mattresses, overgrown sites, decaying platform tents.....that was the best camping trip we've ever had.

Sincerely

Holly Sauder, Vision 2012 member, Troop Leader #7-1969 (now Senior Scouts)

****Response to Camp Concerns #1 Email - from Lynn Richardson**

#2

Dear Holly,

A proposal was recently submitted to the GSNEO board of directors which included a plan for re-opening all the camps to full usage in spring/summer/fall while including a cost-saving suggestion of rotating winter closures. The proposal was tabled for lack of time, but we have great hope that it will be discussed (and passed!) soon. Maybe even in time for your service unit to take advantage. Thank you for your letter. - Lynn Richardson

****Another Response To Camp Concerns #1 Email - from Brent Gardner**

#3

From: "Brent Gardner"

To: "'Lynn Richardson'"

Friday, October 08, 2010 9:11 AM

Subject: RE: Camp Concerns

Dear Lynn,

Thanks for your email and truly I understand your desire to reopen your camp. When a mouse infested mattress is preferable to a certified facility it is obvious the passion is now there. Unfortunately a decade or more of complacency and lack of passion from the previous legacy council has allowed this property to have many deferred maintenance projects that Glen Chin from national and our own visioning group has identified. This passion for one camp is awesome but really prevents us from exploring the opportunities for scouting for the next 100 years. What can we accomplish in the future if we are passionate about the movement of scouting? I believe it was a great opportunity to participate in the visioning process which is still ongoing, but if you look at visioning from the goal to only save a camp you missed the opportunities to impact the face of scouting for the future. Thanks for your information on how deplorable the conditions were at this camp. It really reinforces the decisions made at this point. We need everybody's efforts focused on the visioning process at this time.

Sincerely, Brent Gardner

**** Lynn Richardson's Response to #3 Email**

#4

Brent,

Thank you for your reply & for sharing your thoughts. Did you also send this message to Holly Sauder who posted the concern? I certainly DO have a passion for Crowell Hilaka. But it was Holly who was pointing out that her large service unit needs to look outside of GSNEO to find a campsite since C/H is not available in its entirety.

It's no secret that Lake Erie Council squandered its resources. In pursuit of its own agenda, the administration treated its volunteers shabbily, neglected camp maintenance then sugar-coated what it reported to the board. That is why the delegates of GSLEC unanimously (and enthusiastically) voted for the merger. We believed that things would get better for the girls.

Holly's main concern is that GSNEO is not currently able to meet the needs of a large number of girls for their flagship program. Unfortunately, we have no statistics on how many others are being turned away. We do have anecdotal evidence that girls are being forced elsewhere. We have Holly's story, experiences shared by leaders in last year's survey, and more. These can't be ignored. I believe that Camp Ledgewood fills quickly because Western Reserve Council built up a large volunteer base with its tradition of excellent service. But if troops from the former Lake Erie Council have to compete for space there, what will be the result?

In spite of its maintenance needs, Crowell Hilaka is valuable to the girls of this council as an environmental laboratory. It showcases a complex network of springs, streams, and lakes. In addition, there are the unique historic structures built by inventor James Kirby. What better inspiration for inventive success than for girls to be able to play there near the mill and in the dance hall? It has not escaped anyone's notice that the land in Richfield is valuable real estate. But THE most valuable use for that land is for our girls to fully experience these features.

I think you bring up a legitimate question about my passion to save this one camp as opposed to looking at the big picture. I didn't camp there as a kid; can't claim a lifelong attachment. But I do have a strong Girl Scout background. For Girl Scouting to continue it needs to offer something UNIQUE to girls.

IN generations past, Girl Scouting was often the only organization available for girls. Membership has since declined, as it has in other service/recreational organizations. There is much more competition now. GSUSA has engaged a marketing strategy that stresses girl leadership. That sounds good, but we know from the failure of the Studio2B program that it isn't enough to attract or sustain a strong membership. Girl Scouting is going to have to choose a niche. If the public knows us for "cookies, camping, and crafts" then maybe we need to embrace those and build on those instead of acting as if they are no longer relevant. When people think of girls in the outdoors they should think of Girl Scouts. We should OWN that picture, as well as the picture of girls who are competent to handle basic life skills because they had to learn them while they were camping.

My motivation is in the spirit of thinking globally and acting locally. I am working to encourage full use of Crowell Hilaka because I want Girl Scouting in North East Ohio to continue.

Lynn

****Brent's Response to #4 Email**

#5

Dear Lynn Thanks for explaining your position. Brent