

To Parents of New Ponackians

Coming to camp is often a child's first extended stay away from home. This first step into the unknown world is of great importance and must be a positive one!

Homesickness

Both you and your son should expect some homesickness. It would be unnatural for your son not to miss you, his home, pets, his room... His initial letters may reflect some unhappiness. Please do not be alarmed since boys generally write only when they are feeling lonely. He may not convey to you the other times when he is busy and happy. Please notify us immediately if you receive a sad letter home. In your letters, please do not mention how much you miss him or how much fun he is missing at home.

Letters Home

It will be close to a week before you receive your first letter. Please assume that no news is good news! Otherwise, we would contact you immediately. The counselors check to make sure the boys write home once a week, but if you have received no letter, please call us. If there is something unsettling in your son's letter, we would like to know as soon as possible. Your son's counselor will write a letter to you within the first few days of camp, giving you a report on his progress.

When you read your son's letter, please allow for the temporary nature of his complaints. Rather than worry, give us a call so that we can address any concerns. Please provide your son with a few self addressed envelopes to you and the other family members you would like him to write to.

Illness

Our camp physicians are in residence full time. The physician reviews the health form you have provided to us. The more information you give us, the better we can manage any health concerns. We will notify you immediately in the case of serious illness and take all necessary steps to engage proper medical care.

First Trip to Camp

If you live in the Toronto area, we encourage your son to take the camp bus. He will have an opportunity to meet other boys on the bus, making it easier to start to settle in upon arrival at camp.

The Role of Don and Anne

We may be the only adults your son knows at camp. Encourage him to come and see us **anytime** if he has worries. We are never too busy for him! Let him know that it is always best to speak up so that we can solve any problems that may arise.

Statements to Avoid

- "If you don't like camp, we will come and get you". Please never offer to bring your son home early. Some parents will promise that after two weeks of a four week stay, the boy can return home. This kind of promise has a detrimental effect on your son's attitude

towards camp. If your son truly does not wish to be at camp, we would like to discuss with you the wisdom of sending him.

- **"You will probably be homesick"**. Explain to your son that he can master his feelings and this achievement is one of the reasons for going to camp. We will look after him during any spells of homesickness, (more effectively if he tells someone!)
- **"We are going to miss you and don't know what we are going to do without you"** "You can call us anytime you wish and just reverse the charges". We do not allow boys to call home unless they live out of the country and their parents are unable to visit. A phone call can elicit feelings of homesickness and does not usually, in our experience, make a homesick boy feel better.

While your Son is at Camp

- Write frequent postcards or short letters. It is more important to "get mail" than to receive lengthy letters. We would recommend 3-4 pieces of mail per week **maximum!** If you are traveling and are unable to write letters, please let us know and then an email message to your son would be appropriate. Please write nothing unsettling in your letter. Your son can do nothing but worry. If there is an illness or death, please call Don and Anne.
- If your son is a four week camper, we hope that you will be able to visit on one of the days of the middle weekend. A long drawn out goodbye at the end of the visit is unproductive. Please leave your son at an activity or with his counselor or Don or Anne, never alone in the parking lot. A visit of 3-4 hours is ideal. If you know that you are unable to visit, please inform your son.

Camp Swim Awards

Boom Test: In order to swim in the deep end, your son must swim 40 m on his front, 20 m on his back and tread water for 3 minutes.

Raft Test: In order to use the boats and water ski, your son must complete a continuous swim of 100 m on his back, 50 m on his front and tread water for 5 minutes. He can take as long as he wants and use any stroke he prefers. One of our staff will swim along with him! It often takes more than one try for a younger boy to complete the test... but we continue to try. Some of the youngest boys do not pass their raft test in their first summer at camp.

Tripping Raft Test: Boys age 12 and older may choose to take this test, which enables a boy to paddle in a canoe with his PFD beside him in the boat. He must swim the raft test fully clothed then demonstrate disrobing in the water followed by donning his life jacket while treading water.

Lake Swims: Any boy who has earned his Red Cross Swim Kids 8 may participate in our distance swim across the lake, the Ponacka Half Mile. He will be accompanied by a staff member and spotter in a row

boat. Boys with their Swim Kids Level 10 may swim the Ponacka Mile which is across the lake and back.

Skin Diving: Many boys enjoy using mask, snorkel and fins during free swims or cookouts. Your son is most welcome to bring any such equipment he owns. (Please label!)