Leadership Opportunities for Deaf Youth at Summer Camp

Deaf Camps, Inc.
American Society for Deaf Children conference, June 29, 2019
Deaf Camps, Inc.
a volunteer-run non-profit organization dedicated to providing fun, safe, communication-rich camps that promote the physical, spiritual, and social development of Deaf/hard of hearing children and children learning American Sign Language.
Our program

- 1 week overnight camp
  - Sunday – Friday, end of July
- Manidokan Camp & Retreat Center
  - Knoxville, MD
  - (between Frederick, MD and Harpers Ferry, WV)
5 groups

- Younger Deaf
  grades 2-6

- Middle Deaf
  grades 6-9

- Older Deaf/ASL
  grades 9-12

- Younger ASL
  grades 2-6

- Middle ASL
  grades 6-9
What do campers do?
TRY YOUR SKILLS AT ARCHERY!
Sample Schedule

- 8:15 am Breakfast
- 9:00 am Bible Study*
- 10:00 am Rafting
- 12:15 pm Lunch
- 1:00 pm Climbing Wall
- 3:00 pm Pool
- 4:00 pm Camp Store
- 4:30 pm Free Time
- 5:00 pm Dinner
- 6:30 pm Camp-wide Games
- 8:00 pm Chapel*
- 8:30 pm Snack
- 9:00 pm Showers
- ??? pm Bedtime!

* - Deaf Camps Inc. welcomes campers of all backgrounds. Families can request for campers to be excused from morning Bible study and evening chapel.
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Where are the campers from?

- Local deaf schools
- Targeted outreach to public school Deaf programs
- CODAs, siblings, friends, neighbors, etc.
Deaf Gain in Younger & Middle Camp

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Red = Deaf & Hearing campers together

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Deaf Gain in Older Deaf/ASL Camp

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Counselors In Training (CITs)

- 16 or 17 years old
- Up to 4 positions available
  - Younger Deaf Camp – 2
  - Younger ASL Camp – 2
- ASL-friendly application process
- Weighing CITs’ qualifications
- Paying for CIT training
Counselors

- 18 and up
- ASL-friendly training
  - Online videos
  - ASL-to-English interpreting
- Targeted outreach to:
  - previous campers
  - Gallaudet
  - local Deaf community
Challenges

- VOLUNTEERS
- Counselors that reflect the makeup of our campers
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Equitable assignments
- Year-round/board involvement
Successes

Counselor makeup

+/- 30 counselors annually

25-35% deaf*

5-10 former campers
Our panelists

Hannah

Amy

Marie

Jackie
Your first time at camp...

- How old were you?
- Why did you go to camp?
- What was your experience like?
When you were a camper, did you interact with hearing campers?

- What was it like?
- How did it make you feel?
What made you want to volunteer?
- How old were you?
- What was it like?
- What made you want come back?
- What made you stop?
How do you think you benefitted from camp...

- as a camper?
- as a volunteer?
What do you wish was different about camp?
What are you doing with yourself now? (school, work, personal life, etc.)
What advice do you have for...

- ... parents of potential campers?
- ... kids thinking about going to a camp?
- ... teens thinking about volunteering at a camp?
Questions from the audience?