

CAMP CEDARS

BOY SCOUT SUMMER CAMP



October 12, 2017

As the new Camp Director at Camp Cedars for 2018, I am writing to announce the change of our free-leader policy. Instead, we will charge our current leader rate of \$90 to all leaders spending a week at Camp Cedars. I've worked through the Cedars Advisory Committee which is compiled of volunteer leaders from Mid-America Council troops to come to this conclusion. Why this change? Because I've discovered a problem that requires your help to solve. Let me explain.

Jack and Sam worked in outdoor skills last summer. A scout leader described some excellent service these two young men provided to his troop. His unit arrived in the Scoutcraft area at 5 p.m., to earn the Fire Safety merit badge, just as a group of scouts and leaders was leaving. As it turns out, the leader had the wrong time, and the merit badge had actually started at 4 p.m. But Jack and Sam saw him and his group of scouts, and asked if they could help. The scoutmaster explained the misunderstanding, and was told, "No problem, bring your guys in and we'll teach it again, just for you." At 6 p.m. this scoutmaster and his group of scouts left after getting what the scoutmaster described as a terrific class.

Jack and Sam were at flags at 7:15 a.m., and had spent nearly 10 hours teaching class or otherwise "being on stage." But at 5 p.m., they realized that while their day was scheduled to be over, there was still work that needed to be done, and they eagerly stepped up to deliver a terrific class for several Camp Cedars campers. It's the kind of extra effort we ask of our camp staff team each day.

I'd love to have both Jack and Sam back in 2018, but right now, I'm worried. You see, we must be able to attract and retain quality staff members and that is getting more expensive.

Camp fees are Camp Cedars' source of revenue. I have examined 10 camps in our area, and the all-inclusive fee we charge scouts is the highest among the 10, matched by only one other camp. Most other camps charge additional fees for special programs such as shooting sports, ATV, aviation, handicrafts, etc., so with all the options, their final costs get much closer to ours, even though their sticker price is lower.

I have also compared the fees we charge adults with the fees these 10 other camps charge. On average, the 10 camps studied charge adults \$130.75 per week. Only two of these camps provide any free leaders, and then only a single free leader if 85 percent of the troop's registered members attend camp. Our adult fee is the ninth lowest fee of the 10 camps studied, but because of our free-leader policy, we didn't charge 72 percent of our adult leaders *anything*. This policy, which is simply not sustainable, was unique to Camp Cedars. No other scout camp in our area has anything like it.

When each leader pays our far-below-market \$90 fee, which barely covers food and utilities for a week stay at camp, we will be able to incrementally increase pay to retain great staff members. Ultimately, I believe we need to increase staff pay even more to stay competitive with other employers that target the pool of talented young people from which we draw our staff.

I recognize the enormous contribution your troop's leaders already make by taking time off of work to spend a week at camp. I know the discomfort leaders endure sleeping on a cot in a tent that often isn't watertight. I appreciate (as do the affected scouts and their parents back home) the time leaders spend consoling a home-sick scout at bedtime. I understand the distress of being awakened in the middle of the night by a scout with a dehydration-caused headache, or

one with a raccoon in his tent. I also understand that as scout leaders, we expect Camp Cedars to provide excellent programming for our scouts, and this takes a great staff.

If there are leaders in your troop for whom this policy change makes it hard for them to get to camp, I will work with you to find ways to get them to camp. We don't want any leader in your unit to miss out on Camp Cedars because of this necessary policy change.

Finally, I am also asking for your help in encouraging scouts in your troop who are 14 or older, to apply for summer camp staff positions. We need scouts with leadership and teaching skills, and an eagerness to help others. We have applications available online at www.GoScoutCamping.org.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ralph". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter being a large, stylized 'R'.

Ralph Morocco | Camp Director

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

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