



# YMCA Willson Outdoor Center Outdoor Education Program Guide



The YMCA Willson Outdoor Center is a year-round not-for-profit program facility established in 1918. It is owned and operated by the YMCA of Central Ohio and is one of nine branches. The outdoor education program began in 1970. Funding for the YMCA Willson Outdoor Center comes from participant fees, the United Way of Franklin County and individual, corporate and group donations. No government funding is used for YMCA Willson Outdoor Center programs.

The YMCA Willson Outdoor Center is proud to be accredited by the American Camping Association. Developed exclusively for the camping industry, this nationally recognized program focuses on health and safety issues and requires us to review every facet of operation. The YMCA Willson Outdoor Center has voluntarily submitted to this independent appraisal and has earned this mark of distinction.

## PROGRAM GOALS

It is the goal of the Outdoor Education staff to understand and meet the needs of each school attending outdoor education. Some general goals of the outdoor education program at the YMCA Willson Outdoor Center is to:

- Increase the student's awareness of the environment and his/her relationship with that environment
- Strengthen the socialization/teamwork of students with one another, with teachers, and with other adults involved.
- Incorporate a sense of responsibility and cooperation among students through hands-on, discovery-oriented activities.
- To provide knowledge and content as the YMCA curriculum relates to the State of Ohio proficiency test.
- To incorporate the YMCA values of honesty, caring, respect and responsibility into all aspects of the curriculum and program.

It is our hope that these goals will help teachers and administrators set the groundwork for developing their own program goals.

## THINGS A SCHOOL CAN EXPECT FROM THE YMCA WILLSON OUTDOOR CENTER

- A slide show presentation 4-6 weeks before the school arrives.
- A meeting with teachers to determine a customized schedule and curriculum for the school.
- A 1:15 to 1:20 classroom ratio of YMCA Naturalist Instructors to students. All naturalists live on site and provide 24 hour assistance.
- Naturalist Instructor leadership in all phases of the outdoor education program including classes, afternoon and evening recreation.
- YMCA leadership/assistance with all medical situations except the dispensing of medication.
- Nutritionally balanced meals, providing substitutions for those with food limitations.
- Wonderful winterized facilities that include a dining hall, conference center with aquatic life room, nature center and large group meeting room, the birdhouse complete with one way window, 40 acre lake with 200' boardwalk through the swamp, 45 horses, outdoor athletic complex, winter toboggan slide and a total of 14 winterized cabins housing 200 participants. Separate housing for teachers is easily arranged.
- A supplemental packet of information that includes forms to be used in preparing a school for the visit. This packet provides step-by-step information to make the Outdoor Education school coordinator's job easier.

## CAMP DATE SELECTION FROM YEAR TO YEAR

At Willson, we ask all schools to rotate the seasons that their school attends outdoor education. This allows each school to enjoy a variety of seasons, as well as gives more schools the opportunity to attend outdoor education during their preferred season and dates (attend autumn, winter and spring, or a 2 season rotation of autumn and winter or winter and spring). All schools are given equal priority, based on their first, second and third date choices, whether they have attended Willson for one year or 30 years. All date request forms are mailed to schools in January with the forms due in mid February. The schedule is finalized by mid April with contracts being mailed before the end of the school year. This timeline is completely dependent upon all schools returning their forms on time!

## **CABIN LEADERSHIP**

The YMCA requires that the school provide at least a 1:10 ratio of adult to student supervision at all times. We believe in this so much that 1 adult to every 10 students attend our Center at no cost. The American Camping Association recommends 1 adult to every 6 (1:6) campers aged 6-8; 1:8 for campers 9-14. Additional adults will be charged the student rate. The cabin leadership can be provided by high school (junior or senior) students, college students, parents and/or teachers; depending on the school's wishes. A separate Cabin Leadership Manual will be provided to each school by the Outdoor Education Center to help better orient leaders.

All adults should be carefully screened before coming. This will provide the best possible leadership and role modeling for the students. It is the strong recommendation of the Center that all cabin leaders attend classes with the same study group throughout the experience. This adds continuity for the students and provides additional supervision in each class. A cabin leader orientation to the Center is also extremely important to help acquaint cabin leaders with the program goals and counselor responsibilities (this is usually the responsibility of the teachers). We would encourage cabin leaders to attend the slide show presentations. During afternoon recreation, the YMCA provides time for teachers, cabin leaders and the Outdoor Education Director to meet to discuss concerns, upcoming responsibilities and other general information.

## **HEALTH CARE**

Health care is of utmost importance to all while at the Center. The Outdoor Education Director, designated staff and/or school personnel are the only individuals authorized to administer first aid to students. All medication must be administered by authorized school personnel. The YMCA keeps a well stocked first-aid kit at the Center. In the event of an emergency, school personnel and the YMCA Director will make the decision to transport any participants to Mary Rutan Hospital in Bellefontaine (5 miles from the Center). A signed (in ink) permission/health form must be on file. Those not having a signed health form cannot attend the Outdoor Center. Parents will be contacted prior to any emergency treatment. It is the responsibility of the individual and/or school to provide adequate health and accident insurance, as the YMCA does not provide this. For those participants with food allergies or other food related illnesses, the YMCA provides substitutes, given advance notice. Schools are encouraged to bring a nurse, EMT or school personnel trained in first-aid to provide care. All schools are required to use the YMCA Willson Outdoor Center health form, as it has been approved by our local hospital.

## **WILLSON POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

All groups using the Center must abide by the policies as set forth by the YMCA. They include:

- Upon arrival, all visitors must identify themselves with the Director or at the Center office.
- The use of alcohol and/or other illegal substances on the Center property is strictly prohibited.
- Smoking and/or the use of tobacco is prohibited in front of students or in buildings. Smoking will be permitted behind the dining hall at times when students are not present. (See Director for times and places.)
- In order to help preserve the natural environment; littering, collecting of live specimens and/or vandalism to trees, plants and animals is not permitted. Please keep on the trail, as there is much poison ivy in camp.
- Vehicles are permitted only in designated parking areas. The YMCA is not responsible for damage done to personal cars. Trail bikes and snowmobiles are not permitted on the grounds. YMCA vehicles cannot be used by the school.
- No pets are permitted on the grounds.
- The YMCA is not responsible for students or persons who leave the Center during their experience.
- The use of the waterfront is prohibited unless prior arrangements with the Outdoor Education Director have been made. YMCA policies must be met in order for these areas to be used.
- Groups may not bring or use firearms, flammable materials, or hand/power tools to the Center.
- Students are expected to keep their cabins and other facilities clean. They will also assist with table setting and clearing.
- Physical and verbal punishment or any other form of child abuse is not to be used at the Center. Any suspected child abuse will be reported to the appropriate authorities. Alternative forms of discipline need to be chosen. Most often used is "time-out". In cases of extreme student misconduct, the school and YMCA will decide to send the child home. No refunds are made for students sent home for disciplinary reasons.

It is the goal of the YMCA to provide a fun, safe environment for all participants. By abiding by these guidelines, everyone will help meet our goals!

## THE SCHEDULE

Outdoor Education staff will meet with teachers at their school to develop a customized schedule of classes and evening programs that best fits the needs of the students. Although each schedule is different, a sample daily and class schedule follows for your convenience. Most classes have 15-20 students. Teachers are encouraged to take an active role in classes, whether it be teaching, assisting our instructors, or observing students and classes.

Classes can be taught in one to two hour-long blocks and some classes such as Shawnee Celebration and Early American Crafts Fair can be taught to more than one group simultaneously.

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Day 1</b>					
1:00-2:00	Survival	Pioneer Tools	Wild Wild Weather	Mission Impossible	Orienteering
2:15-3:15	Shawnee Celebration	Survival	Pioneer Tools	Wild Wild Weather	Mission Impossible
3:30-4:30	Climbing Wall	Shawnee Celebration	Survival	Pioneer Tools	Wild Wild Weather
<b>Day 2</b>					
9:15-10:15	Orienteering	Climbing Wall	Shawnee Celebration	Survival	Pioneer Tools
10:30-11:30	Mission Impossible	Orienteering	Climbing Wall	Shawnee Celebration	Survival
11:45-1:15	<b>C</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>OUT</b>
1:30-3:45	Early American Crafts Fair				
<b>Day 3</b>					
9:00-10:00	Wild Wild Weather	Mission Impossible	Orienteering	Climbing Wall	Shawnee Celebration
10:15-11:15	Pioneer Tools	Wild Wild Weather	Mission Impossible	Orienteering	Climbing Wall

## GENERAL PROGRAM SCHEDULE

### ARRIVAL DAY

10:00-11:30	Arrive at Center, move into cabins, orientation, sack lunch
1:00-2:00	Class 1
2:15-3:15	Class 2
3:30-4:30	Class 3
4:30-5:15	Afternoon Recreation
5:15	Table setters, Flag Ceremony
5:30-7:15	Dinner, Songs, Announcements and cabin time
7:15-9:00	Evening Program, snack
10:00	Lights Out and Quiet

### FULL DAYS

6:30	Rise, Cabin Clean-up
7:45	Table setters, Flag Ceremony
8:00	Breakfast, Songs, Announcements
9:15-10:15	Class 4
10:30-11:30	Class 5
11:45-1:00	Cookout
1:30-2:30	Class 6
2:45-3:45	Class 7
3:45-5:15	Afternoon Recreation
5:15	Table setters, Flag Ceremony
5:30	Dinner Songs, Announcements and cabin time
7:15-9:00	Evening Program, snack
10:00	Lights Out and Quiet

### DEPARTURE DAY

6:30	Rise, Cabin Clean-up
7:30	Move luggage to Dining Hall
7:45	Table setters, Flag Ceremony
8:00	Breakfast, Songs, Announcements
9:00-10:00	Class
10:15-11:15	Class
11:30	Lunch
12:30	Depart (Time varies depending on bus schedule)

**YMCA Willson Outdoor Center  
Teacher Planning Checklist**

**The first steps:**

- \_\_\_ Outdoor Education dates set, contract and deposit sent to Willson. Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Purchase Order and transportation arranged.
- \_\_\_ Inform parents and students of the experience
- \_\_\_ Set up the slide show and planning meeting with the Outdoor Education Director (ideally 4-6 weeks prior to the visit.) Class schedule to be determined at the meeting and written by the Outdoor Education Director.
- \_\_\_ Send necessary forms home with students (health form, horseback riding release form if applicable, clothing and equipment list etc). (Either the day before or after the slide show)
- \_\_\_ Recruit cabin leadership (1:10 ratio)
- \_\_\_ Collect money and forms (completed at least 2 weeks before your experience)
- \_\_\_ Call with any questions or concerns that you might have.

*Note:* You will receive a "supplemental packet" of information prior to your visit that will also help walk you through the process and provide you with important forms.

**Information to have at the Planning Meeting/Slide Show:**

- The approximate number of students (male and female), teachers and chaperones you plan to bring.
- Ideas about which classes and evening programs you would like to have.
- The times buses can leave school (day 1) and need to return to school (departure day)
- Knowledge of any medical/food concerns any participants might have
- Determine the actual cost to the students (if you need to include any additional costs such as buses, additional chaperone costs, crafts fairs, etc.
- Schedule a planning meeting with all chaperones
- Questions/concerns you, other teachers or parents have

**One week before your experience:**

- \_\_\_ Fax the school finalization form that provides the number of participants and other related information.
- \_\_\_ Equipment and supplies gathered
- \_\_\_ Confirm the buses.
- \_\_\_ Finalize cabin and study group assignments (table assignments if applicable). Bring a copy for the Outdoor Education Director
- \_\_\_ Watch the weather forecasts and make sure students are preparing for the weather.
- \_\_\_ Distribute a copy of the Outdoor Education schedule, map and Cabin Leader Orientation to all chaperones.
- \_\_\_ Remind adults to bring flashlights, alarm clocks and extra garbage bags with them.
- \_\_\_ Compile a list of major health concerns for the YMCA Staff
- \_\_\_ Double check all health history forms (and horse release forms if horseback riding) for completeness and parent signatures. Bring the school emergency cards also.
- \_\_\_ Assign chaperones to cabin and study groups.

**Come to Willson and enjoy the experience with the Students!**

**Payment of Fees:**

At the end of the outdoor education experience, the Outdoor Education Director and lead teacher will verify the number of students, adults and services provided. The Outdoor Education Director will then give the teacher a copy of the invoice for payment. No additional copies of the invoice will be mailed to the school.

Payment is due net 30 days of service. All parent checks should be made payable to a school fund. The school check should be made payable to "YMCA Willson Outdoor Center". The YMCA does not accept individual checks from the parents.

**Contact information:**

YMCA Willson Outdoor Center  
Outdoor Education Director  
2732 County Road 11  
Bellefontaine, OH 43311-9382  
1-800-423-0427  
Fax: 937-593-6194  
Email: willson4@brightusa.net

## **OTHER EXPERIENCES WITH YMCA WILLSON OUTDOOR CENTER**

**Day Outdoor Education:** We can bring outdoor education to you for the day at your school site or at a local park. In addition the YMCA Willson Outdoor Center, the YMCA of Central Ohio also owns and operates YMCA Hoover Y-Park, a 60 acre YMCA park in south Columbus. Hoover Y-Park and it's staff is a great day site for outdoor education. In addition, they also have an adventure-based curriculum that includes a high ropes course, zip line and climbing wall. You may contact them directly at 614-491-0980. Their staff can accommodate you! This is an excellent lead-in to resident outdoor education or as a one-time experience.

**Summer Camp:** The experience that will last a lifetime...The YMCA Willson Outdoor Center's summer camp program has made summer extra special for boys and girls since 1918. Campers become part of our "family" which is made up of caring counselors and children. Programs include traditional camp, specialty camps with an emphasis on horseback riding, arts, fishing, basketball, sports and golf. Teen enjoy Adventurers, Frontier, Pathfinders, trips and Leadership Development programs. There are 8 different weeks to choose from. Financial assistance is available to children with need.

**Conferences and Retreats:** Do you have a church group, organization or business looking for a site for a conference or retreat? Look no further. The Willson Outdoor Center has the facilities, programs and rates for a relaxed weekend, conference or week-long retreat.

**Family Camp:** Special times for families! Spend President's Day (February), Memorial and/or Labor day holiday weekends at Family Camp. We provide the food, recreation and relaxation for you and your family. Each family will have their own cabin for the weekend. Cabins fill early so call for your reservation today.

**Men's Camp:** A week just special for men to forget the worries of life. Come to camp for a day or week of sports, fishing, relaxation, fun and fellowship. (Week before Labor Day)

**Women's Weekend:** Come to camp and pamper yourself with an unforgettable weekend! Enjoy crafts of all kinds, outdoor activities, cards, massages, hot tubs, amazing food and enough fun to keep you going until next Women's Weekend. (usually the third weekend in April)

**Horselover's Weekends:** For boys and girls ages 10-14. Enjoy a full weekend of horseback riding and horse care. Offered in March, April and September.

**Spring Summer Camp:** for boys and girls ages 7-15. Come try out camp for a great weekend of activity! Climb the wall, take a trail ride, enjoy sports, arts, nature activities, campfires and more! (late March or early April)

**YMCA Mission:** to serve the whole community through programs expressing Judeo-Christian principles that build a healthy spirit, mind and body.



YMCA

We build strong kids,  
strong families, strong communities.