



## PARENT HANDBOOK for CIRCLE

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### Camp Augusta CIRCLE Program Summer 2012

*Communication – Independence – Responsibility:  
Compassionate – Leadership – Empowerment*

Welcome to the Camp Augusta CIRCLE Program!

Thank you so much for your interest in CIRCLE and, perhaps more importantly, for your interest in supporting your child's interest in the program. This parent handbook is written with a few primary purposes:

- To give you, the parent, a clear vision of the mission of CIRCLE.
- To provide insight into the scope of the program, including potential time commitments during the application process and typical pre-camp work.
- To explain some of the key Camp Augusta philosophies that guide the focus of the CIRCLE program, as well as the entire camp community.
- To illuminate our few and important expectations throughout the program.
- To highlight our excitement for working with your child and our hopes for them, whether through CIRCLE or otherwise.

#### **Why is CIRCLE called CIRCLE?**

So, what does 'CIRCLE' refer to, exactly? CIRCLE is an acronym that identifies six core concepts that run throughout our programming, including the application, pre-camp work, and at-camp portions. The first "C" stands for *communication*, perhaps the single most important tenet of camp and of CIRCLE. We will work on building healthy communication practices extensively throughout the program – this includes during the application process, the pre-camp work phase, and the actual 3 weeks that we spend together at Camp Augusta.

The "I" stands for *independence*. You will find that the CIRCLE counselors will work directly with each CIRCLE participant from the very beginning. We certainly hope that parents and any other interested parties will be involved and invested in the CIRCLEr's experience, though *it is crucial that each participant is self-motivated to be a part of the program*. Our vision for parent participation is one in which CIRCLEr's and their families communicate with each other regularly about the various aspects of the programs, including parts that are exciting or challenging. The CIRCLE counselors welcome questions, ideas, and concerns from anyone at anytime, ideally as soon as possible to the first occurrence of any particular concern.

The "R" stands for *responsibility*. This concept fits tightly with our intention to foster independence in the CIRCLEr's, as greater independence and privilege necessitates a stronger sense of responsibility. Every CIRCLEr who demonstrates readiness and commitment will culminate their experience in the program with a week as a co-counselor in a cabin for younger campers at Camp Augusta. To be clear, co-counseling is not the primary focus of CIRCLE, but rather one avenue that we explore for

CIRCLERs to begin putting their growing understanding of communication and leadership styles to work in a specific application.

The second “C” in the acronym stands for *compassionate*. Our entire Camp Augusta community is founded on principles of compassion and fostering genuine understanding and connection between people.

The “L” stands for *leadership*, and is the central core of the whole program – CIRCLE is a teen leadership program. Our hope is to help each CIRCLER develop their individual leadership strengths and style through self-exploration and growth, as well as service to the Camp Augusta community, specifically the younger campers. Finally, we wish for CIRCLERs to feel ready to take their leadership skills beyond camp to the many other aspects of their lives.

Finally, the “E” stands for *empowerment*. CIRCLE gives participants opportunities to find the sources of their own personal motivation and to practice putting their ideals into action. Through the extensive training and reflection process, CIRCLERs will, ideally, gain confidence in the ability that they each possess to have a positive impact on their own lives and the lives of others beyond their time with the program.

### **CIRCLE Timeline & Time Commitments**

The timeline for the CIRCLE program covers approximately 9 months. Though specific dates for the application process, various pre-camp assignments, and time spent at Camp Augusta vary a bit from year to year, there are some general notes that we can make about the schedule:

The application process begins at the beginning of November.

The application process concludes in early December, with notification of acceptance into the CIRCLE program before the New Year.

Pre-camp work will begin in early- to mid-January. The first half of the CIRCLE tuition is due in mid-January and the second half of tuition is due at the end of February.

There will be various assignments throughout the months of January, February, March, April, and May. Pre-camp work will conclude in early June at the latest.

CIRCLERs spend 3 weeks at Camp Augusta during the summer, over back-to-back 2-week and 1-week sessions. This is typically Sessions 3 and 4 *or* Sessions 4 and 5.

We are very aware of the busy schedules that most CIRCLERs’ keep throughout the school year. As such, we work hard to make sure that assignments during the pre-camp phase of the program are well spaced-out and that CIRCLERs have ample notice about due dates. We typically plan and distribute the entire pre-camp work schedule in January with the start of the pre-camp phase, so that CIRCLERs have the opportunity to plan and manage their time accordingly.

A rough estimate of the amount of time we expect CIRCLERs to dedicate to the CIRCLE program during the pre-camp phase is 4 to 10 hours per month, depending upon the specific assignments for each month and the work habits of each CIRCLER. CIRCLE counselors are always happy to work with CIRCLERs on time management skills and expect that *CIRCLERs will communicate any struggles to keep up with the counselors at least a week prior to an approaching due date*. Consistently missing due dates for assignments, especially when paired with poor communication, is a reason for the CIRCLE counselors to reconsider a CIRCLER’s participation in the program for the current year and will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

## **The Application Process**

The application process for the CIRCLE program is rigorous and unlike just about any other program application that most people have ever come across. The application is essay-based and designed to help the CIRCLE counselors get to know the applicants on a deeper level. We ask all applicants to consider each question thoughtfully and to provide full and honest answers to each. A couple of sample questions are, “Who are you?” and, “Why is this opportunity a good fit for who you are and who you want to become?” This open style of questioning not only helps the CIRCLE counselors get to know the applicant, but also provides an incredible opportunity for the applicants to explore aspects of themselves that they may not be asked to consider often, or ever.

*There are no right or wrong answers in the CIRCLE application.* We simply want to get to know each applicant and ensure that he or she and CIRCLE are a great fit for each other. CIRCLE is a tough program mentally, emotionally, and physically (primarily the first two!). It is our genuine belief that program and participant need to be a great mutual match, just like any job that we would consider taking. Making a decision that an applicant is not a fit for the CIRCLE program is a difficult task and not one that we take lightly. As with our staff hiring process, we work diligently to ensure that every CIRCLEr is in a space of genuine openness to learning about the philosophies that guide our camp community and working to serve that community – and themselves.

If the CIRCLE counselors determine that an applicant and CIRCLE are not an appropriate fit for each other at the time, we will contact you via telephone before the New Year to let you know. Though many, many campers truly love and are committed to Camp Augusta, returning as a member of the CIRCLE program is a huge commitment that many teens are simply not at a place in their lives to make – mentally, emotionally, and/or physically.

There are many other options for teens interested in camp work, being outdoors, working with kids, or Camp Augusta specifically. Some of them include:

- Outward Bound, NOLS, etc.
- Domestic or international travel programs
- Service learning programs
- Tutoring at a local school
- Assistant coaching a sports team
- Wilderness trips at Camp Augusta
- Applying for CIRCLE another year

## **Pre-Camp Work for CIRCLE**

The pre-camp phase of the CIRCLE program is *crucial* for helping the CIRCLEr's to develop a strong foundational understanding of the key concepts and philosophies that guide the Camp Augusta community. Our camp community is a special place – one that campers and staff members alike look forward to coming back to year after year – and intentionality places a major role in creating that exceptional atmosphere.

Some of the concepts that are especially relevant to growing into a position of leadership at Camp Augusta are clean communication, compassionate communication (NVC), and integrity. We also give CIRCLEr's the chance to explore themes such as “Girls and Culture”, “Boys and Culture”, and “Social Responsibility” to prepare them for working effectively with other campers.

CIRCLEr's will also work on developing their own evening program, a game that the entire camp

might play together on a given night of a session. This process allows CIRCLers to gain true insight into the creative process behind our programming at Camp Augusta and the dedication and resources that it takes to make each moment at our summer camp truly special.

Finally, the pre-camp phase of the CIRCLE program is when we start to build the community and camaraderie within the group of CIRCLers and counselors. Full participation from each CIRCLer during this phase of the program allows the group to hit the ground running upon arrival to camp and begin to work as a cohesive team.

### **Our Expectations for CIRCLers**

CIRCLE is different than any other leadership program, just as Camp Augusta is very different from any other camp. The mission of the CIRCLE program is as follows:

*“To inspire within teens aged 16-17 an appreciation for and understanding of the beautiful complexities of working intimately with children; to empower teens with focused leadership and communication skills that allow them to engage their world with independence, responsibility, and compassion.”*

Camp Augusta is a summer camp through and through, and we take our job of working with children seriously. The amazing challenges and fun activities and costumed games and cabin bonding that impact our campers all happen because of the sincere personal investment that every one of our community members brings every day. This extreme fun and possibility, balanced with real responsibility, is what we strive for in the CIRCLE program.

We have a few very important expectations of all participants in the CIRCLE program:

1. **CIRCLers communicate openly and consistently with CIRCLE counselors.** The application process and pre-camp work will be done almost exclusively via email, with some phone calls and/or Skype conversations. It is *imperative* that each CIRCLer assumes responsibility for having and checking an email account and is in touch about all CIRCLE work on a regular basis.
2. **CIRCLers complete applications and pre-camp work in a timely way.** We don't believe in assigning “busy work” during CIRCLE. Every assignment is included with the intention to allow CIRCLers to begin a process of personal growth that will allow them to serve the campers at Camp Augusta and will continue to have a positive impact on their lives once they complete the CIRCLE program. Each CIRCLer must communicate any struggles to keep up with work directly with CIRCLE counselors... it's a part of the growth process! *Parents, please allow your child to find the inner drive and motivation to complete the work associated with the CIRCLE program.* This program is about developing inner strength, outward leadership and communication skills, and the desire to interact with the world in a meaningful, productive way.
3. **Actions match words.** No one is perfect and everyone makes mistakes. CIRCLE is all about personal growth and we welcome any and all challenges that our participants bring to the table. What is crucial is that actions truly reflect any stated desire to be a part of the CIRCLE program. Once again, CIRCLE is a very challenging program that is simply not a great fit for everyone at every point in his or her life.

On a related but separate note, the completion of the CIRCLE program is **not** a requirement for past campers to become a counselor at Camp Augusta. Anyone who is 19 or older can apply to be a

counselor through the same application process that virtually all of our staff members have completed. The CIRCLE application process and overall program mimic the staff application and staff summer training experience in many ways.

Prior to acceptance into the CIRCLE program, we will ask that all potential CIRCLE participants read and sign a document that is simply called, "Integrity". It addresses the three expectations outlined above in greater detail and serves as an initial foundation of mutual understanding for us to build the CIRCLE experience. We encourage parents and guardians to read this document as well in order to gain a more complete understanding of how we run the CIRCLE program and why.

As always, please feel free to contact the CIRCLE counselors with any questions at any time. We are very happy to share our thoughts and eager to hear yours! If need be, you are also welcome to get in touch with someone in the Camp Augusta office with non-CIRCLE concerns.

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Parent and/or guardian of CIRCLE applicant, please sign below to indicate that you have read the Camp Augusta CIRCLE Parent Handbook in full. Thank you!

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Name of CIRCLE Applicant \_\_\_\_\_