

SKYLAKE *Ripples*

Fall 2016

2017 SCHEDULE

73rd Season!

October 15, 2016
CILT II Applications Due

November 1, 2016
Priority Enrollment Closes

December 1, 2016
Early Bird Enrollment Ends

2017 STAFF TRAINING

June 5 - June 17

CHILDREN'S CAMP

4 WEEK SESSION DATES

First Session
June 18 - July 15

Second Session
July 16 - August 12

2 WEEK SESSION DATES

Session A June 18 - July 1

Session B July 2 - July 15

Session C July 16 - July 29

Session D July 30 - Aug 12

SKYLAKE'S NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Skylake is very happy to introduce its two new permanent staff. Jessica Portnoy Sonka has returned to Skylake and Paul LaSpada is our true "newbie."

Jessica first attended Skylake as a 7 year old Chickadee in 1985. Jessica's older sister, Adrienne, had started at Skylake in 1984. Jessica attended as a camper for 10 years during the years that camp was owned and operated by John Howe. Jessica returned in 1995 as a Program Aid at the time her father and a partner purchased the camp from John. Jessica went on to be a Program Aid, Junior Staff member, Counselor, Head Girls Counselor, and Kitchen Manager.

In Jessica's years away from Skylake she has gotten married, (actually at the campfire circle in camp), started a gorgeous family, obtained her Masters in Business Administration, and dedicated her time to some great non-profit organizations in the Tahoe-Truckee area. She has been assisting Skylake for a number of years and now is back full time. Jessica is assuming roles of Office Manager, Registrar, and many of the financial operations responsibilities.

The second addition to Skylake is even more exciting. Paul LaSpada is proving that you don't need to have Skylake blood running through your veins to feel Skylake in your heart. Paul is 100% enthusiastic to be at Skylake.

Paul lives in Coarsegold not far from camp. Paul's wife is an elementary school teacher and they are the proud parents of three children. Paul spent the last 10 years as a manager at The Cheesecake Factory in Fresno. His management and "people" skills are incredible. Paul is very quickly picking up on many of the nuances and subtleties of Skylake. Paul will be

the Family Camp Director,
Off-season Site Manager,
and an important Administrator
during the summer season.





ENROLLMENT PRESSURE



It really is unclear what is pushing the calendar so hard. Families are either planning further ahead, or the fact we have earlier enrollment encourages families to enroll earlier. We do know that we receive numerous calls during the summer season asking what our following years' schedule is going to be because vacations are already being planned.

A few years back, we transitioned to a new software program that made it much easier to make the following year's application available. It seems the earlier we post the application the earlier our campers are enrolling. Again, for 2017 we are dramatically ahead of enrollments for 2016.

Camper Survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

Help us make camp the best it can be! Please answer the following questions and give us your thoughts and opinions. Your answers will be kept private from your counselor and your fellow campers. We can't make it better unless you share your thoughts with us.

1. What is your favorite activity? _____
2. What is your least favorite activity? _____
3. What is your favorite camp meal? _____
4. What is your least favorite camp meal? _____
5. Do you like your counselor? ☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not at all
6. Are there any campers who make you feel uncomfortable? ☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not at all
7. Are there any counselors who make you feel uncomfortable? ☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not at all
8. If you could change something about camp, what would it be? _____
9. What would make camp more fun? _____
10. Overall, are you having a good time at camp? ☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not at all

SKYLAKE FORECASTS CAMP

CAMPER SURVEY

Skylake has as part of its normal program a camper survey. The pattern is that on Thursday or Friday of the first week of camp we do our surveys. The procedure is to have the campers come into the dining room, in small groups, usually during CGA or swim call in the afternoons. We tell the campers that the surveys are confidential and only the Directors will be reading them. We also get the campers to spread out so they can feel their responses are confidential.

Why do we do this? What are we trying to learn? There are a couple of primary goals. The overall goal is very simple—we need to know if the camper is happy and adjusting to camp. A number of the questions are very broad and intended to make the camper comfortable with the survey and assist us in that determination. We really are not doing any sophisticated statistical analysis on whether Orange Cream or Chocolate is the favored alternative to 2% milk.

We also have some very significant and meaningful questions having to do with cabin mates and counselors. The operative word these days “uncomfortable.” Does anyone’s behavior make a camper feel uncomfortable? We ask the campers if there is any camper that makes them feel uncomfortable. We ask the campers if there is any staff that makes them feel uncomfortable. We do a follow up question if the answer is yes.

The survey does help us find favorite foods, favorite activities and what the campers would like to see different at camp. Those are all fringe benefits to finding out that there are no bullies in the cabin and that the counselors are doing their jobs.



CILT PROGRAM

The Camper in Leadership Training (CILT) program is as strong today as it ever has been. Campers who graduate out of the CILT program should feel proud of their achievement, as a lot of time and energy is spent over the course of 4 weeks working through the various aspects of the program. Incoming first year CILTs, campers who have just completed the 9th grade, are required to obtain certifications in First Aid, CPR and AED at the Professional Level. The professional level certification is now something that the American Red Cross requires for all Lifeguard certifications. On day one of camp, CILTs will come together to get an overview of what the month will entail and spend some time on some ice breakers. In a nutshell, they will:

1. take part in 3 Leadership focused workshops each week
2. Complete on average 6 hours each week of Lifeguard training
3. will embark on a four day backpacking trip in the Ansel Adams Wilderness covering approximately 20 miles
4. will help plan and operate two camp wide carnivals
5. take part in a CILT project where the group works as a team to do something that somehow enhances Skylake or its legacy.

Before CILT I's are officially enrolled into the program they have an application process outside of signing up for camp. In addition to obtaining First Aid & CPR, CILT applicants will prepare answers to essay questions, submit their most recent school grades, and sign a letter of understanding which outlines what the CILT program is about.

The CILT II program, for those campers who have successfully completed the CILT I year and have just finished the 10th grade, builds upon lessons learned during the first year and adds a strong emphasis on direct leadership with campers. We really work to limit the CILT II program to the number of lower division cabins we have each session because our CILT II's will live in cabins with lower division campers acting as big brother or big sister to a specific cabin. Because of the close connection with our youngest campers, we only enroll those CILT I graduates who really gave their all during their time at camp, who had positive attitudes, and were over all good team players. A favorite saying for our CILT program is that "attitude is everything." This group of campers are really a wonderful force in camp and because they are the oldest group in camp, we hold them to a very high standard and want them to be good examples for the rest of camp.

Lessons learned during the CILT years are those that will stick with our campers for a long time, not to mention the lasting impact of the friendship bonds formed.

If you are an incoming CILT or CILT parent, we are going to email all the exact details of the application process the first week of December following the close of Early Bird Registration. **If there are any questions leading up to this time, please contact Adrienne at Adrienne@skylake.com.**

Adrienne Portnoy (Camp Alum since 1984)



SHASTA CALL

One of the oldest traditions at Skylake had undergone some change over the years. Many years ago, the soda machines in the Rec Room contained Shasta Soda. Every afternoon at 4:30 the kids could come down and get quarters from the Director to access the machine. Over the years the Shasta morphed to Coke, but the term "Shasta Call" persisted.

Time continued to pass, and soda, with its high sugar content and daily need to deal with over 200 empty cans led to the complete elimination of soda, but not the end of Shasta Call. Our afternoon snack time became "Shasta Call" for the current generation of campers and they were none the wiser to the play on words.

In 2016 we returned a little of the old Skylake magic by once every two weeks providing a good old fashioned, and true, "Shasta Call." We filled an old canoe with ice water, submerged 250 cans of true old-fashioned Shasta Soda in the cold water, and then called the campers down for a hot summer day's treat. Old time Skylakers along with our new campers rejoiced in this old tradition that had been revived.





DEVASTATING BARK BEETLE

Anyone that visited Bass Lake last year would have been immediately struck by a couple of visual "wows". The first wow would have been a very positive, "Look at Bass Lake-its full." After many years of being artificially held low to allow for damn construction and then the drought years, Bass Lake was full to the rim for the first time in seven or eight years. It was gorgeous. Bass Lake is a relatively small mountain lake with a very large drainage area. We don't need a huge snowpack for the lake to fill each summer. Hopefully the lake will be full for the foreseeable years to come.

The second "wow" unfortunately is not as enjoyable. The combination of the drought and the bark beetle has devastated our forest. The Sierras have lost 10's of millions of trees. In the Bass Lake basin we are seeing a 60-80% loss of our Ponderosa and Jeffrey Pines. The Incense Cedar and Oaks are doing much better and continue to provide a forest setting. Our Manzanita and brush also provide a great ground cover.

Skylake has been planting 35-50 new trees annually for almost ten years. We definitely will be transitioning into a new forest look over the next ten to fifteen years. Our new trees grow two to four feet per year once they become established.

NEW KITCHEN FOR TRIPS

In a recent visit to Cheley Ranch Camp in Colorado I became very envious of one element of their kitchen structure. Cheley is unique in that they have four dining rooms. The boys and the girls eat separately and then they are divided again by age. Each dining room has its own kitchen. I am not sure I could live without the organized chaos we have at Skylake with everyone eating together.

However, Cheley did have something else that I immediately began to covet. Cheley has a separate kitchen dedicated to food preparation for their out of camp trips. Skylake runs an extensive out of camp trip program and we would benefit greatly with such an arrangement.

This winter we are solving this issue and we are looking forward to a much more coherent trips program. Skylake is converting what previously had been an unused portion of an old garage into a dedicated trip kitchen. Windows are being installed to make this space open and airy. New sheetrock, lighting, sinks, refrigerator and shelving will be installed. We will have room for all of the stoves, bear proof food containers, cook ware and utensils, ice chests, water pumps, etc. in one clean and organized space. We will be able to order and properly store all of the food requirements for the variety of trips we run. The trips staff will be able to manage all of their food requirements without the primary kitchen's involvement.



Although we might be serving powdered eggs and oatmeal for breakfast on a backpack trip, we will much more easily be able to serve fresh fruit and scrambled eggs on an overnight trip. Not only will our planning will be easier, we will be able to get much better at what we do.

Over the years our trips program has grown. We now have a dedicated trips staff leader along with four trip leaders. In 2017 we will be adding an additional trips leader to meet with the increased demand for trips.





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the latest news and
events!



FROM THE DESK OF THE NEW REGISTRAR

With the arrival of fall, we find ourselves in the hustle of Back to School routines, as well as the excitement of the 2017 Summer Enrollment season. It has been wonderful hearing from so many of you who have campers anxious to return in 2017! It reminds me of my many years as a camper, where I counted down the days until camp on the back of my school binder. It is real, this thing we call Skylake Magic! It is incredible for me to see it is still alive and well, just as I remember it. It is great to be back!

We understand this time of year is busy for you, so I wanted to outline a few enrollment related deadlines and reminders to help you with your planning for next summer. These dates are all listed in the side bar of the newsletter. I also want to make sure that you don't delay if you have a 6th grade girl or older to sign up. We will fill up in those villages for most sessions by November, so please help us avoid the heartache of telling you that we can't enroll your daughter right away. Boys camp is a little slower to fill up, and the Chickadee and Warbler villages will be getting full by the end of December. We manage our waitlist diligently throughout the year and are constantly shifting campers into a spot after cancelations and session changes that occur when other families make changes to their summer plans. Let's do our best to get your child enrolled before November 1st though, so that we can avoid the wait list scenario as much as possible for our returning campers.

Another reminder about priority enrollment is that we are reserving your child's spot for the same session that they attended in 2016, particularly Tanager girls and older. If your child is looking to add a session or change a session, we are enrolling them in their guaranteed same session, and will enroll them in their preferred session after priority enrollment ends if we have the space. Please allow the office a few days to work through these enrollment updates in the order we received them. If you are in this situation and don't hear from us by the end of that week on November 4th, feel free to check in with us to see what the status is for your child's enrollment. We will work very hard to accommodate these early requests! In most instances we can accomplish these requests although sometimes it takes a little longer waiting for some cancellations.

Jessica Portnoy Sonka

(Camp Alum since 1985)



WAIC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

I have been active with the Western Association of Independent Camps for the entire 21 years that I have been the Director of Skylake. Currently I am serving on the Board of Directors in the capacity as the Legislative liaison. We monitor all state and federal legislation and court decisions that impact children's camps.

Recently the Board met for a retreat to do strategic planning to chart the future of the organization. This is an annual event and normally we have these meetings at member camps facilities. This gives all of the board members an opportunity to see what other camps look like and compare our operations. Last year we visited Cheley Ranch in Colorado and this year we visited Four Winds located on Orcas Island.

Four Winds is an amazing facility. The girls have little cabins over the water all with little fireplaces. The boys, were an afterthought, and sleep in tents on platforms. An absolutely beautiful site. My most interesting observation is that their traditions include all of the campers wearing uniforms. Not sure how that would go over in California but it sure works for them-they have a two year waiting list.

**ENROLL
TODAY**

It is simple and easy!

Log onto you account, click on the enrollment icon and quickly access all of your information from last year.

www.Skylake.com



SKYLAKE YOSEMITE CAMP

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