

March 20th, 2008

Jonathan, Brad and Tim...

Firstly, I apologise for the delay. I hope you had a fantastic Christmas season. I wish you all the best for 2008, and hope that your preparations for this coming summer are going along nicely. I'm sure it will be a very successful year for you and your business. Now I know the accompanying photos have been a long time coming, as I promised them to you after I finished camp. Well, better late than never I suppose!!

So I guess this is the part where I say a big, huge THANKYOU. My experience at camp last year was certainly an awesome one, you may even say 'life-changing'. I'll admit that I was sceptical. I'd heard all the testimonials from people who'd been to camp, and even listened intently to Brad on orientation day, when he described the life-changing nature of camp. However, I doubted that camp would impact on my life as much as it actually did. But now, I am certainly a "believer"!!!!!! Ha ha!!

I was even more sceptical when I found out I was going to a girl guides camp with very few facilities and hard core outdoor adventurer campers. Camp to me was about beautiful ski boats glistening in the sunshine, huge mess halls with chefs delivering beautifully baked meals and massive cabins just like the movies!! I arrived at Camp Wyoka to find that the only boats were those that required a paddle to move! But what I discovered was Camp Wyoka is a very, very special place. It's a family, a home away from home and it will forever be a place I will keep close to my heart. I learnt that it's not the objects, items, amenities and fancy facilities that make a place great, but quite simply the people. Even after hearing stories about some of the wealthier type of camps, with all their 'conveniences', I wouldn't have traded my experience at Wyoka for anything. At Wyoka, we may not have luxurious comforts, or expensive facilities, or a person to wash our dishes, but we do have heart and soul and it's the spirit of the campers and the staff that makes it such a magical place.

I would love to say that I'd go back to Wyoka or another NYQUEST camp for another great (and I'm sure completely different) experience, however sadly, this is not the case. At the ripe old age of 25, (ha!) I feel that I have so many other places to go and experiences to have and so little time to do it all!! And camp was what made me realise that. The time for reflection (which, busy as camp is, isn't a real lot) enabled me to really appreciate the beauties of travel and of living and working within a world that is completely different to your own. To be able to belong and be accepted into a tightly knit community, not only developed my personal skills such as confidence, independence and maturity, but also encouraged me to get out of my comfort zone...a completely liberating feeling. To learn about another person's world and actually immerse yourself in it, is one that I would hope every person on this planet gets to experience. At camp I was exposed to new ways of doing and more importantly 'seeing' things. I can now look with new eyes on very familiar things, making me a wiser, more open-minded Australian citizen.

My time at Wyoka has inspired me to embark on more journeys into the unknown. So, in June I leave for the UK where I'll be working as a PE teacher for a year, maybe more, who knows? So sadly (and with deep regret) I will not be participating in your program again this year. But I just wanted to let you know that it was NYQUEST and Camp Wyoka together, that inspired me to do even more travelling and get to know the world a little better! Although I do feel as if I need a hundred lifetimes to be able to fit in all that I now want to do!

As you both know, myself and four others from your program met up and went to Cuba for a week after camp finished for some fun and relaxation. This week together only strengthened

our friendships further and now I cannot wait to get to the UK to see Steph (whom I'll be spending Christmas with) and Mechelle, as well as Jack and Jenny and numerous others! Vic and I are still very close, although we live in different states. I am visiting her later this month and she is returning the favour and coming to Sydney the following month. That's the other thing I learnt about travel, and it could well be the most important thing...the people you meet along the way are what makes the travel experience so special. You meet some people who'll be friends for life and others who you may never speak to again, but in some way every one of these people manage to enrich your life with their kindness, friendship and open hearts.

Finally I'd like to finish by pointing out that your professionalism from start to finish was outstanding and you should be commended on that. The pre-departure assistance (especially with the work permits) was invaluable. Jonathan, your calming influence amongst my moments of panic were very assuring. My mother is ever grateful for those late night phone calls!! Meeting the actual owners of the company at the orientation was incredible and very unexpected. Your visit to Wyoka demonstrated your commitment to us and showed us that you really were devoted to ensuring we were happy and comfortable in our positions. Vic and I both felt so proud to show you around what we called home. Your visit revitalised us, and was a valuable part of our overall camp experience. After you left we felt refreshed, inspired and motivated to continue on for another 3 weeks! I highly doubt that any other company would show this level of commitment to their candidates, and this is something that sets you apart from others. Overall, you both have such a personal touch that makes us feel like we are the only client you have! On top of this, it almost feels as if a friendship was formed, rather than a consultant-client relationship. I will have no hesitation in recommending NYQUEST to anyone interested in working at summer camp. I have already passed on your details to some of my Yr 12 students who have just finished school. I will keep you posted, with whether they go through with it or not!!

In conclusion, I just want to say once again....THANK YOU both for everything!! Please keep in touch with details of your very exciting lives and jobs.

Good Luck and Happy Camping,

Haylie Bennett
NYQUEST 2007 Participant from Australia