

Camp Kern Outdoor Education

Students become counselors leading fifth graders in nature activities

After the morning announcements one day in early March, the attendance office was immediately swarmed with students grabbing for pieces of paper. They were not receiving out-to-lunch passes, but an application to be a Camp Kern counselor, which was essentially their pass to a rewarding three day experience.

In the school district, the fifth graders go on an annual trip to Camp Kern, a wooded area north of Cincinnati, for an Outdoor Education program. High School students attend as counselors. Becoming one of these counselors is not that easy. Applicants must fill out a questionnaire pertaining to their camping knowledge and how they would be beneficial to the program. They must also have three recommendations from teachers, plus their guidance counselors. Of those who applied, about half were chosen to join the fifth graders in their camping adventure.

Those counselors chosen

accompanied the campers on their three day/two night trips to Camp Kern. Counselors lived in cabins with campers, and led them in all of their activities. Some of the activities included water hikes, fossil collecting, compass work, candle making, and archery. The counselors ended up having as much fun as the campers, if not more. Senior Meghan McCullough said, "The ho-down was my favorite activity at camp. It was fun to dance with the kids and other counselors. Also seeing how the kids react with the opposite sex is funny."

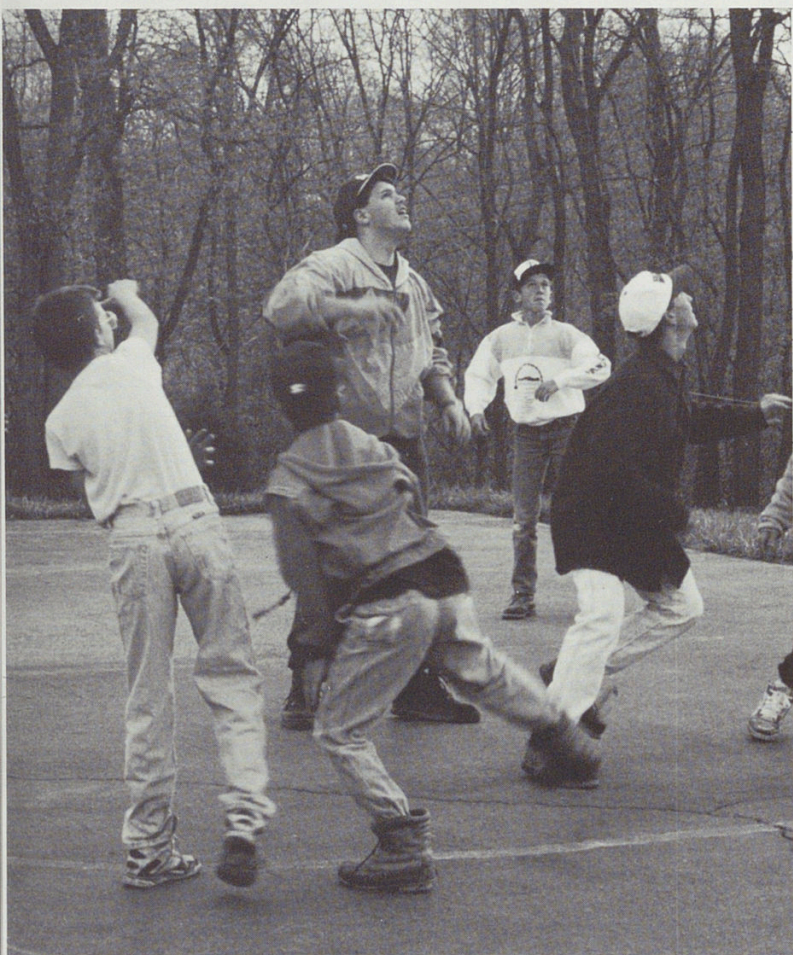
Senior Mark Palfreyman liked the first night campfire. "I enjoyed the songs and stories."

Counselors seemed to learn just as much as the campers. "I think I learned how to deal with young kids. I also learned responsibility to let the kids where they were supposed to be on time," Palfreyman said. "This was a rewarding experience. I think I gained responsibility and had fun at the same time."

Although not quite as clean or lively when they began the adventure, most counselors had a genuine smile on their face and a small ache in their heart when they said goodbye to the campers which became their friends. Furthermore, many counselors concluded they would be Camp Kern counselors again. "I would go to Camp Kern again because I had a great time with the kids and the other counselors were also very fun. I have always enjoyed walking and outdoor activity and Camp Kern had both," Palfreyman concluded.

Those counselors chosen for the Camp Kern Outdoor Nature Education Program clearly had a great time and a beneficial experience, more than they every imagined when they grabbed an application form and filled it out. McCullough summed up the feelings of many, "I loved the kids and being around them. I also liked getting out of school. It was just fun!"

by Carly Bella



During free time, junior Rob Griffie plays basketball with the fifth grade students from the Greene School.

Senior Justin Leyda joins his campers as they listen to the storyteller during the Monday night campfire.