



How!

to Build Relationships With Your Children.

YMCA offers an exciting program that provides opportunities for busy superintendents to slow down, step back and enjoy nature and our environment, while strengthening their family relationships.

BY ROBERT KLITZ, CGCS

*General Manager, Golf Hollywood
Orangebrook Country Club*

In the summer of 1996, a flyer came home from my son Robert's school announcing orientation and registration for the YMCA Indian Guide/Princess program offered by our local North Broward YMCA. My wife Lisa asked me if I would be interested in joining the program with Robert so we could spend more time together.

Camping? In the woods? With a 5-year old? Are you crazy?

My response was not well received.

Hesitantly and reluctantly, I attended the orientation/registration program with a strong sense of being railroaded into something against my will.

Fortunately this program has become a key component in my desire to establish a close and enduring relationship with my children. Time will tell if my efforts will have an effect on my long-term relationships with my children, but the short-term impact on our relationships has been significant.

Now the question you are asking is "What is this nonsense doing in a golf course superintendents' magazine?"



Bob Klitz, CGCS and his daughter Lauren working on bow and arrow skills while on a YMCA Indian Guide/Princess outing.

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Please bear with me and all your questions will be answered.

In March 2000, the St. Lucie County YMCA Indian Guides state campout (POW WOW 2000) was held on the 7,000-acre Florida Ranch Tours property.

This state gathering brought together 2,500 fathers, sons and daughters (and the occasional squaw who was permitted to attend because this is labeled as a family event), for four days of music, war games, Native American

demonstrations and crafts, out-of-control bonfires fires, and cow pies.

It was during this weekend that my path crossed that of several other turf professionals who are involved in the Indian Guide/Princess program in Florida.

Jeff Taylor, golf course superintendent at Boca Pointe Golf Club in Boca Raton, joined the Indian Guide program in the fall of 1999 with his son Anthony.

In Jeff's words, "At the state

campout, Anthony was extremely interested in Jimmy Sawgrass. We listened to his show four times. One observation I have about my tribe is how all the sons got along and enjoyed each other's company.

"For Anthony and me, Indian Guides is a top priority. We will skip Little League or Cub Scouts for a monthly meeting or campout. I am certain my son will always remember our involvement in the program."

The Indian Guide/Princess program typically starts at age 5, and will continue until the son or daughter is ready to move on, break their arrow, and move up into the Trailblazer program. The commitment is typically one monthly meeting to do a craft or activity with your tribe of 10 to 12 families, and then a monthly camp out or similar event with your Nation of 10 or 12 tribes.

Mike Dasher of Dasher Golf Design in Winter Park was also at the state

campout with his daughter Kate.

"I like it because you get to go swimming, hiking, climbing trees, riding bikes, and taking pictures," says Kate. Mike says that taking his daughter away from home for a weekend gives Mom a break, and gives him a chance for some quality one-on-one time with his daughter.

What is a typical campout, and how does it work? One of the most enjoyable spots we have visited this year has been the Peace River campground in Arcadia. I have spent three weekends at this site in the last six months, and will be returning in November.

When camping in the primitive area, you need to be somewhat self sufficient in regards to food, tents, and sleeping equipment to enjoy the true camping experience.

Showers, bathrooms, and a heated swimming pool are available, but they are a slow five-minute drive away. Canoe excursions are available on the

As a father, the best part is the time I get to spend just with the boys, doing guy things such as getting dirty, and skipping the shower... eating stuff that mom won't allow, and staying up in the tent playing Yahtzee and Uno.

- Greg Pheneger

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Peace River, and that has always been the highlight of our trip.

My son Robert and my daughter Lauren both enjoyed sifting through the river sand for ancient shark and mammoth teeth, spotting alligators, birds, and fish, eating a picnic lunch in a canoe, and heading back to the camp site for a pasta dinner over a gas cooking stoves.

A tribe can get as simple or as complex for an outing or a camp-out as the members would like. A short drive close to home is recommended for first-time campers and then, as your kids start to enjoy the experience, heading out for the three-hour road trip will not seem so intimidating. As they say, getting there is half the fun. A three hour drive with your children will surely initiate some in-depth conversations.

The YMCA Indian Guide program was established in 1926 in Richmond Heights, Mo. Harold S. Keltner, St. Louis YMCA director, and his friend Joe Friday, an Ojibway Indian, initiated the program as an integral part of the YMCA work.

Keltner's motivation came from Friday's comments:

"The Indian Father raises his son. He teaches his son to hunt, to track, to fish, to walk softly and silently in the forest, to know the meaning and purpose of life and all he must know, while the white man allows the mother to raise his son."

The parent-child program that Harold Keltner started in 1926 now involves more than 200,000 adults and children annually in the United States. Some of the current Indian Guide dads were brought up in the program with their fathers.

Greg Pheneger, golf course superintendent at Johns Island Club in Vero Beach, cherishes the special times he had with his father in the guides program. Greg's two children, Alex, 8, and James, 4, are currently enjoying the program with their dad through the St. Lucie County YMCA.

"As a father, the best part is the time I get to spend just with the boys, doing guy things such as getting dirty, and skipping the shower," says Greg. "Eat-

ing stuff that mom won't allow, and staying up in the tent playing Yahtzee and Uno."

Alex's favorite camp-out "...was at Wekiva Springs outside of Orlando. We left the campsite at 11 pm, and took flashlights and walked the spring, catching crayfish, turtles, frogs, and minnows with our bare hands."

Greg says this lasted for three hours and resulted in a long nap for the boys on the ride home the next morning.

James's favorite part of camping is the campfires. (Note: Scientists believe that the human male has a gene that is absent in the female species that causes our fascination with fire.)

Greg says that he feels James enjoys the program because "it allows him to feel more grownup. He has to talk in front of the group and tell three things that we have done with each other in the past two weeks. That is part of the ceremony that takes place during the

monthly meetings."

In the turf industry, and many other professions, we are constantly being asked to fix this catastrophe, attend this function, go to this meeting, or find a solution to this problem. Many of these situations force us to choose between work and family.

The YMCA Indian Guide/Princess program will offer you a structured, committed, planned-in-advance opportunity to spend time with your children. You can even mark some events one year ahead in your date book.

I recently read that as men start to enter their mid-life crises in their 50s, their biggest regret is not having spent time with their families. This program could help reduce that pain. If you are interested in the program, contact your local YMCA. Registration is typically held in September, but new members are encouraged to join at any time.

Making Memories for a Lifetime

After reading Bob's article, I sent an e-mail to my daughter, mentioning we were going to run an article on the Indian Guide/Princess program and wondered what she remembered. This is what the now 26-year-old Jennifer had to say:

Dad,

Do I remember? Oh, the days where you didn't realize how silly you looked running around in fringe and a headband!

One of my favorite memories is of the car race that was at Windermere Elementary. You painted flames on the front of my little block of wood, and we put stick-on letters on the side, proudly proclaiming "Happy Squirrel." That little car looked good, and I won in my age range. I'm sure I still have the trophy. I know I have a ton of ribbons on my walking stick (or whatever the official Indian name for it is), which is actually tucked just inside the right front corner of my former closet there, just in case you're feeling really nostalgic.

I also remember how much fun the camping was. In the early days, we were the smallest of the tribes, so the whole underdog thing was always at play. I remember one time we did a really good job on our parchment paper teepee and maybe even won the competition, and the next morning the teepee had been slashed! Horrors! We were quite secure in being the most noble of the tribes.

There are some fun pictures of our group in the family albums, though not many father-daughter shots. It was great fun and something I am very glad we did. Thank you!

Lots of love and a feather to you from Happy Squirrel

I relish the time we spent together in organized activities, camping and competing against the other Indian Princess tribes on campouts. I like to think some of those experiences have helped Jennifer's self-confidence as she now blazes new trails for herself out in Los Angeles.

JJ (alias Gray Fox)