



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

# **2026 FAMILY HANDBOOK**

**SUMMER DAY CAMP**

**YMCA CAMP MANITOU-LIN**

# WELCOME!

At YMCA Camp Manitou-Lin, we truly believe there is no substitute for the camping experience and the meaningful friendships that are made at camp. We recognize the importance of providing safe, fun, and educational summer opportunities for your child. For 112 years, we have had the pleasure and privilege of shaping young minds on the shores of Old Lake Barlow, and we thank you for helping us make another summer possible.

### **From the Directors:**

Thank you for enrolling your child in the Day Camp program at YMCA Camp Manitou-Lin. This packet is intended to guide you through the camping experience from a first-timer's point of view. In order for us to successfully meet our program goals, and to ensure that all campers have the best experience possible, we ask for your help and cooperation in following the guidelines contained in this handbook. This handbook contains important information for you and your camper to prepare for camp this summer. Please feel free to contact us at any time if you have a question that cannot be found in the Family Handbook. Thank you for choosing to share your child with us this summer!

### **In the Spirit of Camping,**

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### **Important Notes:**

- 1. Balance Due Date:** All balances must be paid by June 1. After June 1, balance is due in full upon registration.
- 2. Health Forms:** All health forms are due no later than two weeks before your camper's session begins.
- 3. Day Travel Forms:** Your camper's Day Travel Form must be completed no later than two weeks before your camper's session begins.
- 4. Medication Instructions:** Medication must be in original bottle or container and clearly labeled with your camper's name and dosage instructions. Please see page 4 for more detailed instructions.
- 5. Day Camp Office:** During the summer season (June 8 through August 14), the Camp Office phone will be staffed beginning at 6:00 AM, Monday through Friday. Please call our Main Office/Welcome Center at 269.795.9163 or email hmaske@grymca.org if you have time-sensitive questions or updates, especially relating to travel (i.e. late drop-off, missed bus stop, etc.). Changes must be made by 2pm to bus transportation to take affect that day.

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# LAND OF THE GREAT SPIRIT

On the shores of Old Lake Barlow lies Camp Manitou-Lin, where we have spent the last 112 years shaping campers into Caring, Honest, Respectful, Responsible, and Inclusive people. We are committed to providing a camp experience rich in tradition centered on our core values. All who participate in our programs will gain 21st century skills, independence, friendships, and lifelong memories.

# GETTING READY FOR CAMP

## PRE CAMP HEALTH SCREENING

Families are asked to self-monitor and conduct the following pre-screening procedures for 10 days before the start of their camper's session:

1. Nobody likes to feel sick at camp, to assist us with this please self-screen for presence of illness in those days leading up to camp.
2. If a camper has been in close contact with a person who has tested positive for or quarantined as a result of COVID-19 in the 10 days leading up to your program, please inform us. Campers may be asked to provide a negative COVID-19 test or reschedule to a future session (at no charge to you).

## CELL PHONE POLICY

Camp Manitou-Lin has a NO CELL PHONE policy at camp. Not only are cell phones expensive to replace when they are lost or damaged at camp, but cell phones also interfere with your camper becoming more independent. We understand that parents take a leap of faith by sending their campers to spend time away from home. Unfortunately, when well-intentioned parents send a cell phone to camp 'just in case' the camper needs to call home, the message is, "We love you but don't trust that you are ready to solve challenges on your own." Having a cell phone prevents our counselors and staff from addressing problems that might arise and using that experience to help your child grow.

We will reach out to you if your camper is experiencing a challenge in their adjustment to camp. You can help by talking to your child before they leave for camp and telling them that there is always someone they can reach out to, whether it be their counselor, a camp specialist, the camp nurse or the camp administration. Cell phones brought to camp will be kept in a locked place and returned to the parent at checkout. Please express your trust in our staff and in your child by insisting cell phones stay at home.

## REQUIRED FORMS

Please complete your forms online in your Camp Brain application. These forms are due at least two (2) weeks before your child's session begins. Please take the time to fill these forms out carefully — these are required before a camper can be admitted. If your child is attending more than one week of camp, you only need to fill out one set of forms.

1. **Medical Form:** Campers cannot be admitted to camp without a fully completed and signed medical form. This important medical information will help our staff provide better programs and supervision for your child. Please be as specific as possible—all information is completely confidential, and your answers will help guide our staff to provide the best possible experience for your camper. The more information you can provide, the better!

2. **Transportation Form:** Please select which option(s) your camper will be utilizing for transportation to camp. This is where you will select a bus stop or let us know that you plan to drive your child to Camp.

3. **Camper Information Form: MANDATORY** - This form provides us with critical information about your child's development and readiness for camp. **OPTIONAL** - You may request ONE trail group mate/ bunk mate request of the same or similar age (within 1-2 years). We do our best to accommodate these requests but do not guarantee a match.

4. **Camper Photo: OPTIONAL** - Please consider uploading a current photo of your camper under the "documents" section to help us identify them on the first day!

# TRAVEL INFORMATION

## ARRIVING BY CAR

- Drop off and pick up will take place at Day Camp. Look for the sign labeled DAY CAMP ENTRANCE, not the entrance labeled Main Entrance or Welcome Center. Day Camp is 1/4 mile south of the main entrance, at the corner of a sharp turn in Briggs Road.
- Campers may be dropped off beginning at 8:00am. The day camp program begins at 8:30am.
- Staff will direct your camper to their trail group's picnic table, where they will meet their counselor, get checked in, and spend time with other members of their group.
- The Day Camp program ends at 5:15pm. Check out takes place in the same location as drop off. Please be prepared to show a photo ID every day. Campers will only be released to adults on the Authorized Grown Ups form. We take your child's safety very seriously and appreciate your cooperation and understanding.

## ARRIVING BY BUS

- Please make sure you have selected a bus stop for your child's session if needed. You will choose this within your Camp Brain application. There is a \$50 fee per camper per week for bus transportation. Please ensure that your camper's balance is paid in full prior to the start of the session.
- Please allow 10 minutes before and after the scheduled pick-up/drop-off times for traffic, accidents, unforeseen issues, etc.
- YMCA Camp Manitou-Lin busing is provided by a contracted third party. All campers will travel in full-size yellow school buses.
- There will be bus counselors on each bus. During the ride, counselors will supervise all campers and may lead games or songs during the ride.
- Bus counselors will not allow your camper to board the bus if their Medical form has not been completed online.
- At the end of the day, you will be asked to sign your child out with the bus counselors. A photo ID is required to sign out your camper. Campers must remain on the bus until the bus counselor has checked ID's. Please be patient, especially on the first day, as everyone learns the sign out process.
- IF YOU WILL BE LATE: Please contact the Day Camp office at 269-205-9012. To run on schedule, the bus cannot wait more than 5 minutes past each stop's scheduled departure time. You will have the option of meeting the bus at the next stop or the end of the route if you are going to be late.
- If a parent does not make it to their child's assigned bus stop within the five-minute grace period, the bus will continue its route and parents/guardians will be called. Camp staff and the bus driver will stay with the camper at the last stop on the route and a late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be applied.

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## EARLY PICK UP AND TRAVEL EXCEPTIONS

Due to the nature of Day Camp programming, early departures can be challenging. We will accommodate all written requests or phone requests for early departure; however, our facility spans more than 160 acres and it is likely that your child's group will not be in the immediate vicinity at the requested pick-up time.

Due to supervision guidelines, we are unable to offer temporary care for early departures.

If your camper's day travel mode needs to change (i.e. pick up by car instead of taking the usual bus route), please call or email our camp office as soon as possible with that information. We request that we are notified no later than 2pm to ensure changes can be made to the rosters. This includes changes to Authorized Grown Ups, changing bus routes, switching from bus to car, or vice versa.

If Camp must change or modify pick-up or drop-off procedures, parents and guardians will be contacted by phone and/or email to communicate those changes.

## WHAT TO BRING TO CAMP

Campers should bring a backpack to camp every single day. Please label ALL ITEMS sent to camp with your child's first AND last name.

- Swimsuit and towel (one piece or trunks recommended)
- Reusable water bottle
- Hat and/or sunglasses
- Rain gear and boots (if needed)
- Sunscreen (spray preferred)
- Bug spray (optional)
- One LABELED item to tie-dye (white t-shirt, bandana, etc.)
- Horse Day Camp Experience: Please send your camper with long pants and closed-toe shoes (i.e. sneakers or boots) in their backpack each day.

## TRAIL GROUPS AND COUNSELORS

Campers will be assigned a trail group and counselor(s) for the week. These trail groups are age/grade specific and mixed-gender. These groups will be their "family group" for the entire week and will do all weekly activities together.

If you would like to request a specific camper to be in your child's group, please note that on the Camper Information form. Similarly, if you need to request that a camper NOT be placed in your child's group, please note that on the same form.

Please note that we DO NOT guarantee group mate requests, but will try our best to accommodate them. Last minute changes (i.e. requests made on the first day of camp) are extremely challenging for us to facilitate and will not be considered.

## WHAT TO LEAVE AT HOME

Please do not bring:

- MP3 players, iPods, or personal electronics
- Portable video games (i.e. Nintendo Switch)
- Pocket knives or any weapons
- Personal sports equipment
- Cell phones
- Pets

For more information about our cell phone policy, please see page 6 of this document.

# DAILY SCHEDULE

## DAY CAMP SAMPLE SCHEDULE

- 8:30am - Campers arrive at Day Camp
- 8:50am - Flag raising, welcome, announcements
- 9:00am - Chapel at Day Camp
- 9:30am - Activity 1
- 10:30am - Activity 2
- 11:30am - Lunch
- 12:30pm - Free Swim
- 1:30pm - Activity 3
- 2:30pm - Activity 4
- 3:30pm - Snack
- 4:00pm - Open Areas
- 4:15pm - Flag Lowering
- 4:20pm - Day camp buses loaded
- 4:30pm - Day camp buses depart, check out begins

## ACTIVITY ROTATIONS

Campers will experience a variety of fun and engaging activities with their trail group and counselor during the week. Some activities remain standard from week to week, while others are centered around the theme of the week (see left column) or may change depending on your camper's age group and program. Some possible activity rotations may include:

- Rock climbing wall
- Nature lessons at Willem's Discovery Place
- Arts & Crafts
- Tie Dye (please send your camper with a white t-shirt that is labeled with first and last name)
- Making s'mores over a campfire
- Canoeing or kayaking
- Pontoon boat ride
- Swimming in Barlow Lake
- Visiting the Camp Store
- Archery
- American Ninja Warrior Course
- Kangaroo Jumper



# GENERAL INFORMATION

## MEALS AND SNACKS

Day Campers will be provided with lunch each day from our camp kitchen. We serve kid-friendly menu items like turkey sandwiches, pizza, macaroni and cheese, mini corn dogs, fresh fruit and vegetables, and lots of water! If your child has food allergies or dietary restrictions, please include that information in your child's Medical Form so our kitchen staff can prepare appropriate meals for them. If your camper is a picky eater, feel free to send them with a lunch from home.

While our camp kitchen does not serve products with nuts, we cannot guarantee that our facility is nut-free. We ask that our day campers opt to leave snacks with nuts at home. Our staff will remind campers not to share food or snacks so as to avoid allergen transmission.

Day Campers will be given an afternoon snack each day. If your child rides the bus, or is an active snacker, feel free to pack additional snacks for your child each day. Also, make sure your camper is sent with a refillable water bottle each day that is labeled with their first and last name!

## CAMP PHOTOS

Campers will receive one Trail Group photo in their Friday folder each week. These are 5x7 full-color photos of your child's "trail group" of campers and their counselor.

Trail Group photos are taken each Monday morning. We have a very tight turnaround to get our photos ordered, printed, and shipped to camp within four days, so retakes are not possible. If your camper is absent on Monday morning, the trail group photo will not include your camper. If your photo is lost, email us at [camp@grymca.org](mailto:camp@grymca.org).

## CAMP STORE

Campers will be able to visit our camp store twice during their session. Most families deposit \$20.00 – 25.00 for one session, which can be used to purchase items like t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, slushies, snacks, and other items.

Families can add money to their camper's store account by logging into your Camp Brain account. Please do not send your camper on the bus with cash in their possession. Bus counselors cannot accept camp store money.

You can check your Camp Brain account to see any remaining balance in your camper's store account at any time. You may request a refund by emailing [camp@grymca.org](mailto:camp@grymca.org). Any unclaimed money at the end of the summer (Sept. 1) will be donated to our Annual Campaign, which aids in sending children to camp at a reduced cost.

## DAY CAMP NEWSLETTER

You will receive an emailed copy of our Day Camp Newsletter at the beginning of your camper's session. This document has information regarding any special activities that are planned for the rest of the week. It also has a schedule of activities your camper will be doing throughout the week, along with reminders from the Day Camp team. Make sure to check your email so you don't miss out!

## PENNY WARS

Penny Wars is a day camp tradition that takes place each week, campers are invited to bring in loose change to raise money for our Annual Campaign. Campers will be able to place their change in their own trail group boxes or another's pennies (and notes) count as positive points, where as silver counts as negative points and can be used to sabotage other trail groups. Penny wars will be open Tuesday-Friday, with the trail group earning the most points receiving a trail group prize following Friday lunch!

# POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

## ILLNESS POLICY

Please keep your child home if they are ill and/or running a fever. Children must be symptom-free for at least 72 hours prior to returning to camp. If a child becomes ill during camp, a parent or emergency contact will be notified to pick up the child.

## LOST AND FOUND/PERSONAL PROPERTY

Please leave anything of value at home as we cannot ensure its safety. Labeling all of your camper's belongings helps return misplaced items back to the camper. In an effort to reduce lost and found, camp staff will label frequently lost items at camp including water bottles that are not labeled with the camper's first and last name.

YMCA Camp Manitou-Lin will not be responsible for lost clothing and personal property brought from home. Unclaimed lost and found property will be kept for one week following the last day of camp (August 15) and then donated to local charities. If your camper has lost an item at camp, please email a description (color, size, etc.) of the lost item to [camp@grymca.org](mailto:camp@grymca.org) and we will do our best to locate the item or items.

## VALUES EMPHASIS AND EXPECTATIONS

YMCA Camp Manitou-Lin's core values are Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, and Inclusion. Our entire camp family is expected to conduct themselves in such a way to model these values at all times. Our daily chapel services, "thought of the day," and pre-meal graces emphasize these core values and how they can be applied to different parts of the camp experience.

The expectation that all campers follow our core values is implemented with great care and respect by our camp staff. We expect campers to follow camp rules, have a positive attitude, try new things, be respectful of others' space and belongings, be cooperative and helpful, maintain open communication, and have fun!

## RAINY DAYS AND EMERGENCIES

Camp remains in regular operation, rain or shine. Regular camp activities will continue during light rain conditions. During more severe weather, including lightning and thunder or extreme heat, the day's schedule may be altered and indoor/alternate activities will be provided.

In the event of an emergency, we will make every effort to notify parents by phone and email. If necessary, emergency transportation will be handled by 911 and local emergency services.

## PAYMENTS, REFUNDS, AND CANCELLATIONS

We are unable to prorate camp fees due to scheduling needs or conflicts. All camp fees must be paid by June 1. If you register for camp after this date, the entire balance is due upon registration. A \$50 deposit holds your child's spot for camp. This deposit includes a \$25 administrative fee. The registration deposit and administrative fee covers all basic administrative costs for each registration. Please give us a minimum of two weeks notice to cancel or change your registrations for camp. No shows for a registered session will result in the forfeiture of the full registration fee.

The camp director reserves the right to decline the application of any child, or send home any child who, according to the Director's discretion, negatively affects other campers experience, or puts themselves or others at risk. If a child is dismissed from camp, there will be no refund issued.

## MEDICATIONS

All medications, except asthma inhalers and Epi-Pens, are to be kept secured with the Camp Nurse. "Medications" includes over the counter drugs like Tylenol, Pepto Bismol, Sudafed, vitamins, melatonin, etc. The Camp Nurse, coordinators, or directors will administer prescribed medications. All medications must be turned in directly to the camp director (car drop-off) or bus counselor on Monday morning. Empty containers or remaining medication will be returned on Friday afternoon.

Michigan law requires that we only accept medications in original containers (prescription or over-the-counter packaging). Medications can only be administered according to the directions on the container.

# HOMESICKNESS

Homesickness is usually a result of the discomfort of being in strange surroundings. Camp staff are trained to deal with homesickness by providing extra patience and attention and by keeping the camper active. Most campers quickly recover because they are having so much fun. You will be called if there is a serious problem. The general rule of “no news is good news” stands true at YMCA Camp Manitou-Lin as we are working with the staff to give all of our campers an amazing experience.

If you are feeling apprehensive about sending your child off or your child is feeling nervous, there is a lot of great information on the internet and books to help both parents and campers have a successful camp experience. We know that it is as hard for the parents as it is for the campers to be away from each other, so we encourage you to look for information.

The following excerpts are taken from Dr. Chris Thurber’s website, [www.campspirit.com](http://www.campspirit.com). Dr. Chris Thurber is a board-certified clinical psychologist, author, consultant, and father. A graduate of Harvard University, Chris co-authored the critically acclaimed “Summer Camp Handbook,” the premier preparatory resource for new campers and families. He has more than 30 years of camping experience and had written numerous book chapters and scholarly articles on homesickness prevention and child development. (YMCA Camp Manitou-Lin does not receive anything from Dr. Chris Thurber, we merely are giving parents a resource that we feel is helpful.)

## TOP FIVE TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CAMP EXPERIENCE

### 1. Avoid making a “pick up deal.”

Promising, “If you feel homesick, I will come and get you” undermines children’s confidence and dramatically intensifies homesickness. Instead, normalize their anxiety, talk positively about camp, and assure them that you want them to enjoy themselves. Sometimes we find that campers feel like they need “permission” to have fun!

### 2. Double check the camp’s packing list.

Many seasons of experience have helped your child’s camp directors refine the packing list to include all the essentials. So, if it says, “stick bug repellent,” do not buy spray. If it says, “no electronics,” then leave the cell phone at home.

### 3. Spend practice time away from home.

Nothing builds confidence and teaches a child how to cope with time away from home better than.... (you guessed it)...time away from home. That weekend at Grandma and Grandpa’s house will do wonders for their adjustment.

### 4. Label everything.

It is easy to lose things at camp, but if you want it back, it’s got to have your name on it. Label everything from your t-shirts to your sleeping bag, to your toothbrush. And leave really expensive things at home.

### 5. Double check the opening and closing dates and times.

Start camp off on a smooth note by arriving on time and on the right day. Use a wall calendar in the months prior to opening day to make an exciting countdown to the big day.

# MORE ABOUT OUR STAFF

## BULLYING AND BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

The YMCA recognizes that positive discipline teaches and encourages the healthy development of a child's self-esteem. The YMCA does not allow the use of corporal or physical punishment. Instead, caregivers employ positive discipline techniques, which include praising, calling attention to appropriate behavior and acting as positive role models to influence and reinforce positive behavior. Camp reinforces positive behavior through the use of behavioral contracts. The staff sets limits that are developmentally appropriate and consistently enforced.

Staff will encourage and assist all children in following the camp rules. All campers will be given an orientation on the first day of camp. All questions will be answered and the rules will be explained during this orientation. Campers will be held accountable for their behavior through positive feedback and age-appropriate consequences.

What can I do to find out if bullying is occurring?

Bullying among peers is growing daily in the United States. At camp, we train our staff on preventing, recognizing, and dealing with bullying. However, we need your help as the parent to ward off and correct bullying behavior and to get bullied children to speak up when they are bullied. If your child is having challenges at camp within their group, we strongly recommend that you reach out to the main camp office line and connect with a director.

What is it?

Bullying is any intentional, repeated hurtful act, including inflicting physical pain, name-calling, exclusion, defacing property, hurtful pranks and public humiliation. You can be part of the solution through awareness, insight and action. Prevention is the best cure. Use dinner time as an opportunity to ask your children about camp and the specifics of their experience every day. Remember, that your tone and listening skills is critical to whether your child will have these conversations with you in an honest way.

## AFTER CAMP ENDS...

Our pledge is to put your children in the company of the most trustworthy and capable young adults we can hire: counselors who are well suited to the task of caring for campers. The effort we put into screening and selecting our staff is part of that pledge. Our staff work with your children in the context of a visible, well scrutinized environment that has many built-in checks and balances. Counselors are supervised by senior staff guided by clear, firm policies regarding behavior. Their actions are also visible to co-workers and campers.

By hiring them, we do not recommend them as babysitters, nannies, or child companions outside of camp. In general, we discourage our staff from having contact with your children after camp since we cannot supervise their actions outside of camp programs. We hire our staff for the camp season. We do not take responsibility for their behavior off season.

We also know many children exchange contact information (e.g. email address, profile name, cell phone numbers) with counselors without our or your specific awareness or permission. Staff are explicitly forbidden from connecting with campers in this way while they are employed at Camp. We also advise against this sort of communication in the "off season." We recommend that you as the parent supervise your child's online activities just as you do other aspects of their life in your home, and oversee any off-season contact between staff members and your child. You take full responsibility to oversee any contact that results between your child and their camp staff.

Campers are always welcome to write to their counselor at the following address, and we will make sure it is forwarded to their school address:

(Counselor's Name)  
c/o Camp Manitou-Lin  
1095 N Briggs Rd  
Middleville, MI 49333

# DIRECTIONS TO CAMP

## From Grand Rapids:

- Take M-37 (East Beltline/Broadmoor) south through Caledonia.
- Approximately 5 miles past Caledonia turn right on Cherry Valley.
- Approximately another 5 miles, after a sharp right curve, immediately turn left on Briggs Rd.
- Camp is on the right 3/4 of a mile down Briggs Rd. CONTINUE PAST THE MAIN ENTRANCE FOR THE DAY CAMP ENTRANCE

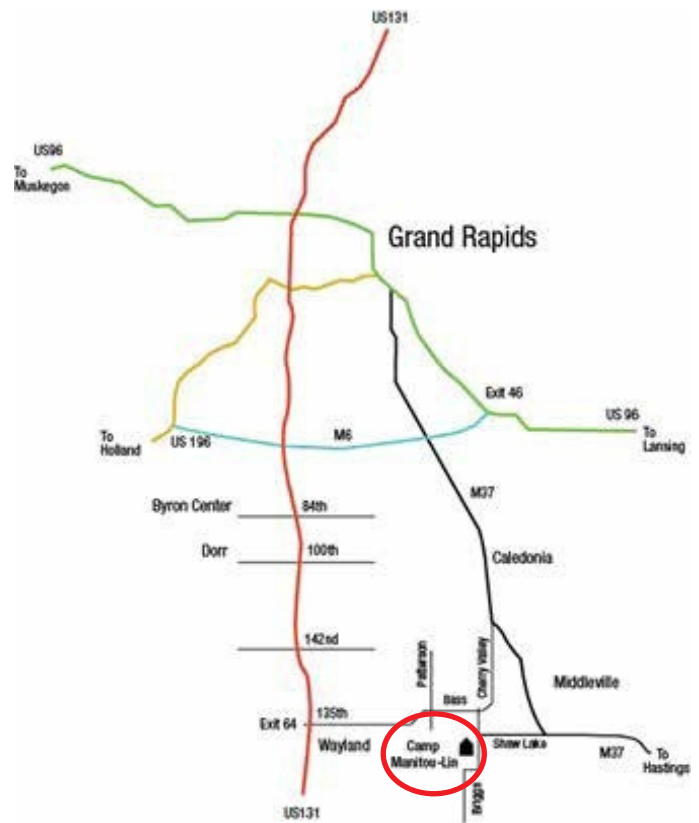
## From US-131:

- Take US-131 South to Wayland Exit (exit #64)
- Go left (East) 8 miles and turn right on Briggs Rd.
- Camp is on the right 3/4 of a mile down Briggs Rd. CONTINUE PAST THE MAIN ENTRANCE FOR THE DAY CAMP ENTRANCE

## From Lansing:

- Take US-96 West towards Grand Rapids
- Take US-6 West (use exit #46) towards M-37
- Take the Kentwood exit (exit #15) and turn left on M-37 South
- Take M-37 South through Caledonia
- Approximately 5 miles past Caledonia follow Cherry Valley to the right
- Approximately another 5 miles, after a sharp right curve, immediately turn left on Briggs Rd.
- Camp is on the right, 3/4 of a mile down Briggs Rd. CONTINUE PAST THE MAIN ENTRANCE FOR THE DAY CAMP ENTRANCE

**DAY CAMP WILL BEGIN AND END THEIR DAY AT THE DAY CAMP ENTRANCE. THIS IS DIFFERENT THAN THE MAIN ENTRANCE. DAY CAMP CAN BE ACCESSED 1/2 MILE SOUTH OF THE MAIN ENTRANCE, ON THE EAST SIDE OF BRIGGS RD.**



## From Detroit:

- Take I-94 West to Kalamazoo
- Turn right and take US-131 North towards Grand Rapids
- Take exit #64
- Go right (east) 8 miles and turn right on Briggs Rd
- Camp is on the right, 3/4 of a mile down Briggs Rd. CONTINUE PAST THE MAIN ENTRANCE FOR THE DAY CAMP ENTRANCE