**Need a Mentor? Go to Camp!**

January is National Mentor month, a time to celebrate and encourage the positive relationships that are critical to the development of children and youth – the positive relationships that are developed and encouraged each year at camp.

The idea of a mentor is an ancient one. In Greek mythology, when Odysseus, King of Ithaca, went to battle in the Trojan War, he placed his friend, Mentor, in charge of his son and his kingdom. Today, Mentor has become synonymous with someone who imparts wisdom to and shares knowledge with a less experienced person. Mentoring relationships are special and often life-changing.

The camp experience is uniquely designed to foster these relationships. When counselors and camp staff engage with campers, they are not just teaching – they are using the core elements of positive mentoring relationships.

* Camp counselors **share** and teach through stories and anecdotes. They impart wisdom from their own successes and failures, and offer the insight that comes from experience.
* Camp counselors **model** appropriate behaviors. They show campers how to play fairly, show empathy, and win and lose gracefully.
* Camp counselors **guide** campers through the learning landscape of life. They teach the things that cannot be taught in school – how to live with others, how to build friendships, how to lead, and how to work as a team.
* Camp counselors **support**campers emotionally. They offer reassurance when situations become difficult or overwhelming. Counselors are there to not only lend a hand but to help campers work through difficult moments and feel the sense of accomplishment that comes from conquering obstacles
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These relationships aren’t just a nice addition to childhood and young adult development – kids *need*them. They need nurturing mentors – people outside of their family that take an interest in who they are, root for their successes, and help them learn that failures are critical stepping stones on the path of success.

Each year for millions of children and youth, those relationships are developed at camp.

Contact Public Relations at 765.346.3391 or [pr@ACAcamps.org](mailto:pr@ACAcamps.org) to interview an ACA spokesperson or for more information about the mentoring relationships developed at camp. For customizable public service announcements or article reprints, visit our [Press Room](http://www.acacamps.org/press-room).