

## **Extension Notes**

Personal Column for June 1, 2010

By Gary Hall, Iowa State University Regional Extension Education Director

### **Choose the Right Summer Camp**

The closer summer gets, the more excited your children may become to go away to a summer camp. I'm even involved and excited to be a part of the 4-H Junior Camp scheduled for June 9-11 at the Cedar Springs Camp near Floyd, Iowa.

Summer camps incorporate outdoor activities into fun and creative day and overnight experiences that teach children important skills and values. There are many different types of summer camps which you can select.

When choosing between day camps and overnight camps, consider the individual needs and preferences of your child. Many camps offer a variety of themes throughout the summer, talk with children to identify an experience they would view as exciting. In addition, consider the location of the site, the length of the schedule and child's past experiences in being away from home overnight.

If overnight camps are the right choice, there are many strategies parents can use to prepare campers and ensure they have a positive experience, specifically if they are concerned about homesickness. First, talk with the children about what they can expect at summer camp. Camps will provide you and your child with information in advance of the camp regarding the schedule, what to bring and what not to bring to camp. A listing of the rules and expectations at camp are usually included.

To ensure children still feel connected to home, consider sending care packages or communicating with children either via e-mail or postal mail during their time at camp. Finally, contact the camp staff in advance to address any concerns or questions or to schedule a day visit to ensure that both the parent and camper are familiar and comfortable with the environment.

Some simple preparation will provide your child with a great summer and a positive camping experience. Take some time now to consider summer camps. Contact your local Extension office for a complete list of all the 4-H opportunities for your child.

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