



A Typical Day for a Camp Trailblazer Volunteer

By Colleen Wheatley

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Each of our camp's are unique in their location, programming and of course our amazing campers, this is an example of what a day as a Camp Trailblazer Volunteer could be like. The following is a fictional account, based on some true stories. In the days building up to camp there is a flutter of last minute emails, criminal reference checks and online training. Then finally it's time for Camp Trailblazers!

Day 1



16:00 hrs – Drop off

I show up at a mall parking lot listed as the pick up location. It's my first time volunteering at Camp Trailblazers. It's been awhile since I've been to camp, but I remember having a lot of fun when I went to camp as a kid and hope to be a part of it for the campers at Camp Trailblazers. I'm not sure where to go until I see a bus in the far corner of the parking lot and a huddle of cars. As I get closer, I see a huddle families and campers with anxious smiles loading backpacks and sleeping bags onto the bus. I finally catch the eye of a woman with a clipboard and AboutFace shirt and introduce myself. She shakes my hand says thanks for joining Camp Trailblazers this

year and gestures to the bus before hurrying off to collect last minute paper work. I look around and decide that I might as well join the few campers who are heading to the bus door.

17:30hrs - Bus ride to Camp

The bus gets quiet as we pull away from the row of families waving good bye to everyone on the bus. Looking around there are a few campers who seem to know each other catching up and chatting with each other at the back of the bus. I look around and see one of the campers sitting by themselves staring out the window. I decide to sit down and discovered that this is the camper's first time going to camp, (other than day camp for a few days in the summer). They say they're not homesick, but worry about being away from their cat for the weekend. I start asking the camper about their pets and hobbies, and am relieved to see the tears in the corners of their eyes replaced by a shy smile.





21:00hrs - Cabin time

I can't believe that it's already time to start winding down and head back to the cabin with some of the campers. We've eating dinner (thankfully camp food has improved since my time as a camper), learned each others names (I'm still trying to remember all of the campers' names, but they seem to be willing to help me out, or at least enjoy laughing with me when I get wrong). When we get back to the cabin I take a top bunk and find myself looking forward to bed. Camp has only just begun and I'm already tired but I'm already looking forward to my time at camp!

23:00 - Bed time?

I thought it was going to be an early night, but it took awhile to get everyone in pajamas, teeth brushed, and ready for bed. It also turns out I'm in the chatty cabin and campers have been playing cards and talking non stop for the last hour. It's great getting to know every one, but I'm not sure if I'll ever get to sleep.... ever!



Day 2



6:50hrs - Wake up

My alarm goes off and I'm groggy as I look at the time. It's a Saturday and I'm getting up before 7 am?! I get up to start waking up the campers who begged me to wake them up early so they can do the polar bear swim with everyone else. I am met with "5 more minutes" and sleeping bags pulled over heads. I even debate going back to bed myself, before hearing the other campers start heading down to the water. Eventually, my cabin mates and I gather and get ready to head out for the morning.

8:00hrs - Polarbear Dip

With sleep in our eyes and some stellar cases of bed head, my campers and I finally make it to the water. The mist is still hovering across the lake. We jump in and it turns out the water is surprisingly warm, actually it's not, it is definitely FREEZING! I am now wide awake and ready for the day.





9:00hrs – High ropes

We are divided into groups and my group starts heading over to the high ropes course. I use to love rock climbing when I was a kid so I can't wait to get out to the course. Once we're there, we go over the safety equipment and a few enthusiastic campers climb up the pole and seem to get through the elements 20 feet above our head without any fear or hesitation. There are a few who are less certain about putting the harness on. The group spends 20 minutes cheering on a camper who clings to the ladder, before coming back down. We congratulate her on getting outside of her comfort zone and she shrugs and says next she'll try to get to the top. We're running out of time, but campers insist that I try the catwalk. With 5 minutes to go I look up; it looks simple enough. As I shimmy up the ladder and then the pole, I realize it's a lot higher than I thought. I am grateful when I make it across to the other side; am lowered to the ground on my legs which have become jelly. I am greeted with high fives before we head off to our next activity. I'm pretty proud of myself, and now

get why the campers were slightly nervous themselves!

11:00hrs – Kick the can

I have never played such an intense game of kick the can.

13:30hrs - AboutFace time

We all get together to talk about what makes Camp Trailblazers unique. I get flashbacks of what it was like for me as a kid. We talk about what it feels like to feel different from other kids at school. When I was younger it was different. We did not have Facebook or cell phones, but it seems like some of the challenges of being a kid are still the same today. I learn a lot about everyone in the group, and we agree that what we share in the discussion is kept within the group. I'm happy to see the kids open up, feeling comfortable, and I wish to myself that I could take away every single one of their worries, negative experiences and ban all bullies from their lives but realize just being here and creating that safe place at camp is a huge step forward.





16:00hrs – Capture the Flag

I have been crawling on my stomach with a group of campers through the edge of the woods for 20 minutes. It's amazing the same campers who cannot sit still long enough for me to eat a full lunch are now scolding me if I snap a twig or rustle some leaves. We can see the other team guarding a suspicious corner of the playing field. Finally, we decide to rush them and attempt to locate our flag. There is a flurry of us running and yelling directions to each other. A camper on my team yell's she saw the flag, but runs back to safety on our side, while being chased by the other team. I am not so lucky and am escorted to jail where I am guarded by a stern looking 11 year old. I am secretly relieved to be able to sit down and catch my breath.

19:00hrs – Talent Show

I am wearing an over sized jacket and jester hat. I am not sure how this fits my character in the skit, but am told I need to wear it. Our play goes well and everyone laughs and claps. I hope my pint sized director didn't notice that I forgot my lines. When we leave the stage, my director reminds me of the original line, but thankfully tells me I 'did a pretty okay job'.



20:00hrs - Campfire

We sit around the campfire. I've lent my hoodie to a camper who forgot to bring an extra layer to the camp fire, which is not giving off as much heat as I would have liked. We are huddled together, because we are all a little cold, but nobody wants to leave. We sing campfire songs, a few pop songs, and there is a debate about whether One Direction is any good or not. Campers take turns teaching the group songs, there are even a few solo performances and a few of us get dragged into improv skits. I had forgotten what it's like to be a kid enjoying the night sky and campfire.



21:30hrs – Snack and bed?

We head back to the dining hall to warm up and grab some snacks. Hot chocolate is made, spilled, cleaned up, and repeated. All of my cabin mates who looked like they were getting tired and ready for bed at the campfire are now full of energy and have told me they want to stay up the whole night talking in the cabin! Who's idea was the hot chocolate?! It was a bad one. We eventually head back to the cabin and I start thinking about what has become my cozy sleeping bag and wonder what time I'll get to sleep tonight and what time I'll need to set my alarm for tomorrow so that I can get up and do it

all again tomorrow...

Thank you to all of our Camp Trailblazer Volunteers for 2012

West Coast: Greg, John, Vikrim

Manitoba: Brittany, Cindy, Jim

Ontario: Amanda, Andrew, Anthony, Audrey, Dan, Kariym, Kelly, Kyle, Lina, Micaiah, Pauline, Shaun

Nova Scotia: Caroline, Jill, Kathleen, Linda, Liz, Tim

Newfoundland: Brittany, Jessica, Laura, Andrew

Every year, we have dozens of amazing people volunteer their time at Camp Trailblazers. Sometimes it's the first time these individuals have been involved with AboutFace, or even been to camp! This often means taking time off work, school and disconnecting from cell phones/computers for 3-4 days. It involves early mornings, late nights, sleeping on plastic mattresses in sleeping bags, giving up Starbucks coffee, and eating camp every meal with a table of 8 campers. It is exhausting, exhilarating, challenging, emotional, enlightening and a lot of fun.

Camp Trailblazers would not be possible without our amazing volunteers. From Trailblazer Campers and everyone at AboutFace **thank you!** We truly appreciate your time and commitment to making camp a fantastic experience for our youth!



THANK YOU!!!!