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FAQs: Working at Glen Brook

What is the camp like? The answer to this question is multi-faceted. First, it is smaller than most camps with a community of 120 people including campers and staff. It is a beautiful old farm, which was converted to a camp 63 years ago. Glen Brook is in many ways a traditional New England camp with all the usual sports and activities. Our differences? We tend to be more cooperative than competitive, although we do play hard and enjoy some tournaments. We value the arts just as much as the sports. We encourage campers to be well-rounded individuals rather than specialists in a particular area. For that reason, younger campers have an assigned activity schedule and try everything. The older two groups have several choices for electives, but also enjoy a good balance of activities. While we are not a religious camp in the usual understanding of the word, we do believe that all humans and the natural world around us have a spiritual core for which we are grateful. Families of all different religions are very content here. Most of our campers come from middle class families. However, our good scholarship program allows us to help low-income families enjoy camp as well. We have about 10-15% minority children and staff here at camp, and like most camps, we strive to create an even more diversified community.

Where is it? Glen Brook is in Marlborough, a very small town near the very small city of Keene in the Mt. Monadnock region of southwestern New Hampshire. We are about 2 hours west of Boston and 4 hours north of New York City.

How long is it? There is a week of staff orientation plus the six weeks the campers are here. It then takes us about 36 hours to clean and close the camp. With travel, expect this adventure to be about 52 days. Unlike many camps, we finish in early August leaving a fair amount of time to take a couple weeks off before colleges and schools open.

How much would I earn? Junior counselors start at \$1400 if they have been a CIT or have equivalent experience. First year counselors receive \$1400 + depending on certifications and other experience. Veteran counselors earn \$1500-\$1800, again depending on experience, certifications, and prior job reviews. Professional teachers receive \$2,000 and up. Nurses, chefs, and department directors are paid competitively with other camps. International counselors receive compensation packages determined by a sponsoring organization such as CCUSA or BUNAC. Workers' Compensation insurance is provided for any injuries on the job, and there is a modest accident/sickness policy that covers non-work incidents. Most college students are still eligible on their parent's policies. International counselors are covered by

insurance provided by the sponsoring organization. Of course, you also get a decent bed and lots of good food, not to mention an invaluable experience and great friends who tend to stay in touch for years.

Who is on the staff? There are about 35 staff members of which about 10 are administrators, cooks, nurses, etc. There are about 25 counselor-types, mostly college age, who are responsible for most of the teaching and “cabin” work with the campers.. About 2/3 of our staff are Glen Brook veterans of some sort, either old campers or counselors. There are usually about five international counselors. While we really value all our old friends who return, we are also pleased to meet new friends and welcome fresh ideas into camp. Newcomers to Glen Brook discover a warm open environment full of lasting friendships.

What would I do? Most Glen Brook counselors are both cabin counselors and instructors.

As instructors you have an opportunity to improve your teaching skills by planning lessons and teaching or assisting about three activity periods (hours) per day in areas. During meals, two counselors sit at each table of campers to manage the table and interact with campers on a more personal, social level. Counselors work cooperatively by taking turns covering the duty schedule: organizing and running an evening activity, supervising the free period, helping the lifeguards as lookouts, and taking turns on night duty.

As cabin counselors, you are the first link in the care and growth and safety of the 4-8 campers in your group. This means being a very good big brother or sister while exhibiting parental responsibility with the compassion of a best friend. You are responsible for waking the kids up, making sure they clean their quarters and themselves. You are with them during rest period (and getting some rest yourself). At night, you put them to bed with a bedtime story. Each day you be sure they know where they are going. The most rewarding and challenging part of your job is to build a community within the cabin and to help each camper meet challenges. These may be everything from dealing with a potential bully, channeling the energy of a hyperactive camper, to little things like making sure they change socks, finding a missing laundry bag, or helping them write a letter home. It is a big responsibility, but when you figure it out, it is extraordinarily rewarding. You will find yourself writing your campers during the year.

How much time off is there? You will receive the equivalent of about 6 days off during camp. Most of these will be in 24-hour chunks during which you are free to leave camp. You will also have, on average, at least 2 hours off each day, and often more. Normally you are not on night duty more than two nights a week, which means that you are free from about 9:30 to 11:30, but on hand if there is a camp emergency such as a fire or storm. The staff traditionally finds ways to entertain themselves in camp during the evenings playing cards and games, sharing music, or renting an occasional movie. Counselors usually may arrange to go to town one night a week in small groups if the safe supervision levels of the camp are insured.

What rules will I have to follow? There is a list of fairly standard personnel policies that you will receive when offered a position. Basically, you are living in community that thrives on good communication, common sense, and open minds. It is essential to recognize your responsibility as a teacher and role model of young children, keeping the camp safe, and embracing a set of standards that keeps a diverse community functioning smoothly.

Glen Brook is tobacco-free. If you are a smoker, please find one of the camps that allow it because you cannot quit here, nor can you sneak off campus for a quick smoke.

Alcohol is not allowed on camp property. You can have a drink or two on your day off if you are of age, but when you walk back into camp you must immediately be ready to deal with any crisis.

You may never, ever use or possess any illegal recreational drugs while in Glen Brook employment. In fact, if you have been using drugs during the past year please do not apply. Use of drugs is absolutely incompatible with teaching and being a role model for young children.

There are also rules to protect the children and you from abuse, violence, and harassment. These rules help staff from getting themselves in situations that may be quite harmless, but are potentially dangerous when perceptions go awry. Swearing and offensive language are not allowed. And yes, you must be in your quarters by 11:30 unless you are away on your day off.

Is there a dress code or “uniform?” This more than any other area can get muddy, so we want to be clear from the start. No, there is not a uniform. Yes, there is a dress code which is largely unwritten. Glen Brook is a place for campers to enjoy a natural environment free of the manipulation of commercialism in the fashion and pop culture industries. As role models, you are trusted by parents to be clean, healthy, wholesome individuals. Use common sense with your clothing choices and body adornment.

What is staff training like? Our biggest goal is staff training is to build a team of people dedicated to giving our campers the best summer of their lives. We present and discuss the philosophies of camp. We talk about important issues regarding safety and well-being of the campers and the camp as a whole. We practice fire drills and emergency procedures. We play games, hike, and work on projects. We spend time sharing ideas and learning about one another. We go over lesson planning and time management. We sing together, do skits, and converse. Overall, we build a strong foundation based on friendship and professional respect that will prepare us to be wonderful teachers and role models for 75 wide-eyed children.

Is there a religious element?

“Religion” is one of the most misunderstood words in our world. Technically, it means re-connection, as to our spiritual roots. We prefer to say a “spiritual” element. Children and counselors of many faiths feel comfortable and are represented here. A questioning of the meaning of it all is also welcome and probably healthy. Most of us have gone through agnostic doubts. On the other hand, neither atheists nor fundamentalists are usually happy here. We are not sectarian nor teach any particular doctrine. However, we do want children to feel gratitude and reverence for the created world and the creative forces in the world, whether that be seen as a personal god or as a higher spiritual principle. We do say a grace together before each meal and we all gather once a week for a meeting of contemplation and gratitude. It is awkward and confusing for children if their counselor refuses to participate. Our weekly meeting may include a reading from the Old Testament, Native American writings, “wise” folk tales, or a Hindu story. Sometimes our songs include the words Lord or God, sometimes Beauty Around Us and Beauty Above Us, sometimes Father Sun or Mother Earth. We live in a culture that is predominantly Judeo-Christian, and so many of our cultural references, songs, etc. reflect that. We strive to be sensitive and inclusive, but we do not always bow to political correctness. We don’t want anyone to feel uncomfortable here, but we are also not going to dilute our experiences and beliefs until they are acceptable to everybody. We believe there is a spiritual core within every person and a spiritual essence within the world, and our counselors need to be comfortable with that thought.

What does it mean, “Weaving Waldorf education with traditional New England camping.”

Glen Brook is owned by The Waldorf School of Garden City, an independent school in NY. During the school year we operate as its country campus facility for outdoor/environmental programs for this school and many others. There are hundreds of Waldorf schools all over the world based on a philosophy of education developed by an Austrian named Rudolf Steiner.

There are themes for each class and suggested curricular topics that recognize the developmental stages of the child. Strengthening and harmonizing mind, body, heart and spirit is a primary goal. An integration of the lessons is attempted so that, as an example, a science lesson may incorporate artistic drawings, historical context, and good writing practice. Children need to have opportunities to observe and discover, and not just have final answers fed to them to write down for the test on Friday. Play is not just a way to blow off steam at recess, but an opportunity to develop social skills and explore one’s relationship with the world. Imagination is a precious gift to be protected and not trampled by intense

media bombardment. Rich stories and literature have been vehicles throughout our history to pass along culture and morality and are poorly replaced by sitcoms and teen magazines.

Waldorf teachers recognize the spiritual essence that lies at the heart of the child before them. The student is not just a bundle of neural networks to be programmed and learned responses to external stimuli, but also a spiritual creation with soul and spirit that must be protected, nurtured and strengthened. Our goal should be to help our students to become truly free human beings who can take up life with confidence, make meaningful decisions and contributions, and relate to their fellow humankind and the world around them in a manner consistent with the ideals of truth, beauty, and goodness.

Summer camp is not school, and most of us are not trained educators, but we try to foster some of these ideas whenever possible and try not to get in the way too much. We try to bring a healthy dose of cooperative activity to help balance the intense competition that surrounds us. We balance our sports with crafts, and our wild games of Capture the Flag with quiet singing or watching a honeybee gather nectar from clover. We prefer to learn about plants first by observing their characteristics and their relationship to the forest around them before later dissecting them to look at cells under the microscope. We try to have the day as rhythmical as possible and give the children a regular schedule to live by. The value of sleep cannot be underestimated, and we try to make the transition peaceful with a good bedtime story, perhaps even by candlelight. The media and pop culture are so deeply inserted in our lives that it would be naïve to ignore it completely in camp, but on the other hand we want to use these precious few weeks during which we can try to replace Pokemon, Brittany Spears, and Abercrombie and Fitch with canoeing, and roasting marshmallows, and making a community of friends that may live on for years. We try to have the campers do their best work whenever possible, rather than just throw something together and make do. They should be proud of what they do. The art should be artistic, the jumpshot well executed, the skit tasteful and well rehearsed, the table manners polite, and the cabins tidy.

Most of these are not exclusively “Waldorf” ideas or methods as such and can be found in many good camps, but they are ideals which we hope our staff will keep in mind and try to pass along to the kids in our care.