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EXPLORE  
LEARN  
GROW

YMCA of GREATER PITTSBURGH  
**ADVENTURERS  
COMPASS**





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## **YMCA Mission**

To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

## **YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh Y Adventurers Program**

Y Adventurers is more than a program—it's a journey you take with your child to build lifelong memories, strengthen your bond, and connect you with other families. Designed for children ages 5 and up and their fathers/father figures, Adventurers offers a structured yet flexible way to spend intentional, meaningful time together.

No gift you give to your child will mean as much as simple time that you spend with them, and you'll find that you will treasure those moments as well. Life is a journey that begins within the sacred circle of the family.

### **The Adventurers empowers parents and children to:**

- Strengthen your connection through shared experiences
- Build your child's confidence and sense of self-worth
- Explore together—physically, mentally, and spiritually
- Enjoy quality time that's both fun and constructive
- Meet other families with children of similar ages
- Create traditions and memories that will last a lifetime

Whether you're hiking through the woods, crafting a car or boat, or sharing stories around a campfire, this is your chance to truly get to know your kid.

To help guide us on our journey we use the arrow. The arrow is one of the oldest items in existence. It has been used by every culture in one form or another. It truly is one of the only symbols known throughout the world. The arrow is built to fly straight and true and help guide us on our path as we move forward together.

## **Slogan: Pals Always, Friends Forever**

### **Six Aims**

The six aims of the YMCA Adventurers are used to help us along our journey:

- To be clean in body and pure in heart.
- To be pals always with my father / daughter/son.
- To love the sacred circle of my family.
- To be attentive while others speak.
- To love my neighbor as myself.
- To seek and preserve the beauty of the great spirits work in forest, field and stream.

### **History**

Around a simple campfire, two men engaged in deep conversation, reflecting carefully on the events of history and their effect on the integrity of the family and quality of life. It was 1926. The conversation between Harold Keltner, a YMCA Director in St. Louis, and Joe Friday, an Ojibwa Indian, inspired the beginning of a remarkable tradition.

Together, Keltner and Friday started what is now known as Y Guides; the idea was to provide a program where the father would have an opportunity to guide their sons in exploring the outdoors and teaching them the ways of the land and deepening the bond between father and child. The father-child program spread quickly across the United States in the 1950s when it expanded to include fathers and daughters, and was founded right here in Pittsburgh in 1968. While some program elements have changed, Y Adventurers continues to capture the magic and intent of Keltner and Friday's original idea: strengthening father-child relationships through activities that allow dads to spend quality one-on-one time with their children.

For nearly 100 years, the magic of the Y Adventurers program has been found within its simplicity. Simply put, the Y Adventurers is a program for all dads/father figures and all kids. Participants come from all walks of life, sharing a goal of working side by side to learn lessons that improve spirit, mind and body. Our mission compels us to embrace, reflect and celebrate the richness of diversity within each other. Our core values – caring, honesty, respect, responsibility, guide everything we do. Through this program, dads, sons and daughters are helping to strengthen our community, together.

# Y ADVENTURERS PROGRAM STRUCTURE

## **Y Adventurers Program Structure\***

**Y Guides – Father and Sons: Kindergarten through 6th Grade**

**Y Princesses – Father and Daughters: Kindergarten through 6th Grade**

**Y Trailblazers – Father and Teen Sons: 7th through 12th Grade**

**Y Questors – Father and Teen Daughters: 7th through 12th Grade**

\* While our program titles reference “Father/Son” and “Father/Daughter” traditions, all children and caring adults are welcome to participate — including mothers, guardians, grandparents, mentors, and non-binary or non-father-identifying caregivers.

At the Y, We are one Y for all — our programs are rooted in inclusion, belonging, and strengthening family bonds of all kinds. If you have questions about participating in a way that reflects your family structure or identity, please contact the appropriate YMCA program leader at 412-833-5600, or at [spencerguides@ymcapgh.org](mailto:spencerguides@ymcapgh.org) for a supportive conversation.

## **Y Adventure Program Groups**

### **Spencer Family YMCA (South Hills of Pittsburgh)**

- Council: Group of volunteers that help plan and organize the calendar
- Nation: Each Community Grouping of the South Hills is a subgroup, i.e. Bethel Park Nation, Mt. Lebanon Nation, Upper St. Clair/South Fayette Nation etc.
- Tribe: Small group of typically around 7-15 father/child pairs

### **Baierl Family YMCA (North Hills of Pittsburgh) & Sampson Family YMCA (East of Pittsburgh)**

- Council: Group of volunteers that help plan and organize the calendar
- Tribe : Small group of typically around 7-15 father/child pairs

## **Questors and Trailblazers**

When your child graduates from Princesses or Guides, it signals achievement of significant milestones in your lives. Both you and your child have grown in numerous ways, and undoubtedly you have grown close with many great shared experiences. The end of Princesses or Guides can be very sad, but don't fret because the fun does not need to end here.

The YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh runs programs for middle-school and high-school children and their dads

- Questors - daughters and dads
- Trailblazers - sons and dads

These programs provide more challenging activities suitable for the older kids. They are run similarly in that each program has volunteer leaders that help to organize and execute activities. We work with the Questors and Trailblazers youth to plan activities that they are interested in. A few of the activities throughout the year are:

- Fall, Winter, and Spring Campouts
- Go-Karting
- Horseback riding
- Escape room
- Opportunities to give back to the communities
- Cosmic Bowling



## Volunteer Leadership

The Y Adventurers Program is only as successful as the volunteers who believe in and make the program truly one of a kind. The basis of a successful program is a strong set of volunteers who are passionate about spending time with their own children and making sure others have the same opportunities.

The volunteer positions outlined below are for an annual term but may be eligible for renewal:

- Council Chief: Both the guides and princess program have a lead Council Chief. This volunteer assists in orchestrating and managing the program for the year.
- Asst. Council Chief: Each Nation has an Assistant Council Chief. This volunteer is responsible for assisting the Council Chief in duties as well, and/or filling in as lead volunteer when the council chief is not available.
- Nation Chief: The Nation Chief helps disseminate information to the community specific nations, they also help organize nation level events.
- Assistant Nation Chief: The assistant nation chief provides support to the nation chief, and/or and steps in when the nation chief is not available.
- Firekeeper: Each Nation or group selects a firekeeper. The firekeepers main duty is to build the council fire for campfires on Saturday evening at the campout.
- Scout: Each Nation or group selects a scout. The scout's main duty is to lead the recruiting efforts for their nation to bring new families into the Y Adventurers programs.
- Pioneer: Each Nation or group selects a pioneer. The pioneer's main duty is to assist any new tribes or new members into the nation to ensure a smooth transition into the program.
- Tribe Chief: Each tribe will nominate a tribe chief. The tribe chief is responsible to disseminate information to the members of their tribe, and to organize monthly activities for the tribe.
- Assistant. Tribe Chief: Each tribe will nominate an assistant tribe chief; their main responsibility is to support the tribe chief and step in when they are not available.



## Registration

The Y Adventurers Program has an annual registration fee. Registration is completed through the YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh registration system. Your annual registration fee to the Y Adventurers gives you access to the ability to be placed in a tribe and participation in council level activities. The typical program year runs from September through June. Council level activities are YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh coordinated events requiring registration, which include additional fees. Timely registration is required for events; please register when communication is received. Refunds may be provided for cancellations up to 1 week prior to the scheduled event.

Any registrations past the program registration deadline are subject to late fees.

Activity Structure

The Y Adventurers Program promotes meaningful relationships between a parent and their child through activities that they can participate in together and make lifelong memories.

Your Nation and Tribe may also organize additional activities, separate from official YMCA programming. These optional events are planned at the group’s discretion. While participation may be encouraged, it is at your own expense and risk. Externally coordinated events are not affiliated with or supervised by the YMCA.

Council activities are often repeated annually; dates, seasons, and times may change. Most activities focus on parent/child participation. Some activities may include the entire family and will be marketed as such.

Typical season activities may include:

Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fall Family Picnic (Family Event)</li><li>• Fall Camp (Guides &amp; Princesses)</li><li>• Annual Hayride (Guides &amp; Princesses)</li><li>• Kennywood Lights (Family Event)</li><li>• Wreath Sale (Guides &amp; Princesses)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ice Skating (Guides and Princesses)</li><li>• Winter Camp</li><li>• Glam Jam (Princesses)</li><li>• Princess Cup (Princesses)</li><li>• Chule Car or FASCAR - (Guides)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spring Camp</li><li>• Daddy Daughter Dance (Princesses)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PigNic (Family Event)</li><li>• Guides Wildthings</li><li>• Sleepover (Guides)</li></ul>

Giving Back to our Neighbors and Communities

One of the 6 Aims is to Love thy Neighbor as Thyself. The YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh is a nonprofit organization committed to Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility. Through these core values, we provide a wide range of impactful programs—including summer camps, child care, veteran wellness, cancer support groups, food security efforts, and senior wellness programs. We offer many opportunities to give back to the communities in which we live throughout the year. Some of these include:

- Community Service Activities: Community clean up days, caroling at a local senior center, helping new members to feel welcome into the program/tribe
- Camp Deer Valley and Camp Kon-O-Kwee Spencer Work Weekends: Geared to parent/child projects such as wood splitting, wood stacking, building shelves, trail maintenance, fire pit maintenance, etc. Work Weekends are a great way to give back to the camps that welcome us each year!
- Wreath Sale: Giving Back Through Tradition
  - Why We Fundraise - The Y Adventurers program proudly supports this mission by participating in this major fundraising event each year. Our initiative helps make YMCA programs accessible to all—regardless of a family’s ability to pay.
  - How It Works - Each fall, families have the opportunity to sell beautiful, handmade live wreaths to friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers. Proceeds from the Wreath Sale are used in two important ways:
    - A significant portion goes directly to the YMCA Annual Campaign, which helps support life changing programs offered at the Y such as YMCA Camp AIM, a summer camp for children with special needs.
    - A portion is reinvested into the Y Adventurers program, helping offset costs and keep activities affordable for all participants.
  - Make an Impact - By participating in the Wreath Sale, you’re not just supporting your tribe—you’re helping make the YMCA’s mission a reality for families across our region. It’s a meaningful way to give back, teach service, and build stronger communities together.

## Financial Assistance

The YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh makes strengthening our community our cause. Every day we provide the resources needed for all to grow, learn and thrive. We nurture life lessons in kids, foster health and well-being at every age, and bring neighbors together to pursue their passions, building a better us for all. We provide aid to financially struggling families so nobody is ever turned away from a Y program because of money. Our annual campaign makes this possible. Please reach out to the YMCA staff for more information or details to apply.

## Getting Started

- Register for the program through the YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh's registration system.
- Review email received from registration
- Attend a Welcome Meeting
- Get added to the Tribe's communication platform
- Order your vests\*

\*Tribe Vests are an important part of your program experience. To order a vest, please meet with your Tribe Leader.

## Getting the Most Out of the Program

Participation in events and attending the campouts are an integral part of the program. Participating in the Wreath Sale is a key component to seeing the YMCA in action and giving back to the programs that have helped to shape our own relationships. Wear your vest to all events! To engage at a deeper level, we recommend considering Volunteer Leadership!

## Patches

You have the opportunity to earn patches to show off different accomplishments and events that you have attended! Patches are often heat activated, but we recommend stitching them on to the vest for long term adherence. Some examples of patches are shown below!

- Year Patches - insert picture of how they should go on back of vests
- Wolf Patch-Recruiting
- Star Patch-Volunteering as a tribe to help at events/activities

## Campouts

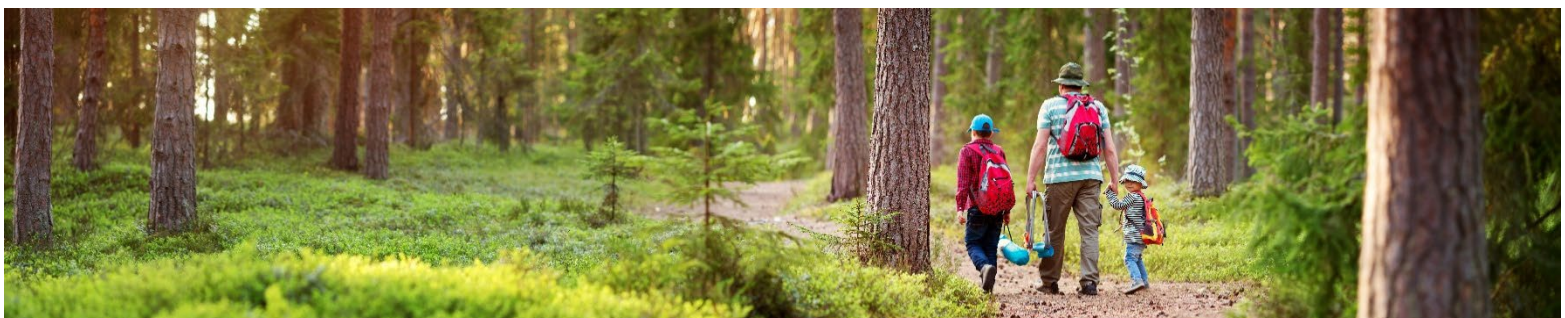
Campouts typically occur three times a year: fall, winter and spring. The most common camp locations are:

- YMCA Camp Kon-O-Kwee-Spencer, Fombell, PA
- YMCA Deer Valley Family Camp, Forth Hill, PA
- Camp Soles, Rockwood, PA

Participants stay in lodges, with 1-5 families assigned to a room. Rooms are equipped with bunk beds. It is expected that adults sleep on the bottom bunk and their children sleep on the respective top bunk. Everyone attending the campout will be assigned a bed/room upon arrival, please remain to these assignments for both safety and capacity.

## Packing For Camp

When packing for camp, plan for the weather! Dressing in layers is recommended; we can have warm days and cool nights. Please remember, the camping experience may mean you can get wet or muddy. Packing extra sets of clothing and shoes can be helpful.





Recommended Packing List:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Snacks</li><li>• Drinks</li><li>• Water Bottles</li><li>• Bedding (Twin XL) and pillows</li><li>• Sleeping bags and/or blankets</li><li>• Tribe Vest</li><li>• Camping chair</li><li>• Flashlights, lantern, and/or headlamp</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tackle box and fishing pole</li><li>• Coat (rain or winter)</li><li>• Hat</li><li>• Undergarments and socks (long and short)</li><li>• Sweatshirts and t-shirts</li><li>• Hiking pants, shorts, and jeans</li><li>• Pajamas</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hiking shoes, shower shoes, and comfy shoes</li><li>• Toothbrush and toothpaste</li><li>• Shampoo, conditioner, soap</li><li>• Towels and washcloths</li><li>• Sunscreen and bug spray</li><li>• Phone charger</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sleds, helmets, hand warmers, ski goggles, and boots (Winter campout)</li><li>• Medicine kit (first aid supplies, medications, etc)*</li></ul> <p>*Please keep all medications secured and out of the reach of children at all times.</p>
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Example Schedule:

Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<b>Morning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provided breakfast</li><li>• Scheduled/staff supervised activities</li><li>• Unscheduled activities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provided breakfast</li><li>• Staff supervised activities</li><li>• Unscheduled activities</li></ul>
<b>Afternoon</b>	<p>Tribe organized activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provided lunch</li><li>• Scheduled/staff supervised activities</li><li>• Unscheduled activities</li></ul>	<p>Raffle winners selected and announced</p>
<b>Evening</b>	<p>All-camp activity (Tribe Run)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Campfire ceremony</li><li>• Optional tribe activities</li><li>• Dinner with your tribe at cabin*</li></ul> <p>*Optional provided dinner at lodge</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arrival and check-in (5pm-9pm)</li><li>• Dinner on your own</li></ul> <p>Tribe activities in cabin</p>		

Ceremonies

Camps are anchored by ceremonies. The ceremonies are when all campers from all tribes convene together around a bonfire after dinner. The ceremonies are run by Nation Leadership who lead the assembly through campfire songs, camp cheers and prepared remarks. These assemblies are the heart of the campout and shouldn't be missed!

Activities

Scheduled and staff supervised activities may include archery, BB, Climbing, or Crafts

Additional unscheduled and/or unsupervised activities may be available. Parents/legal guardians are responsible for their child's participation. Some of these activities may include hiking trails, Gaga ball, Basketball, or other sports.

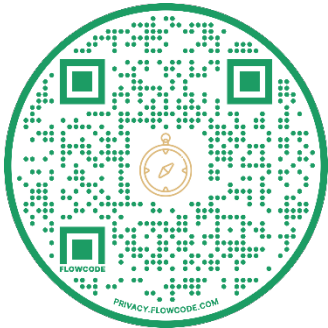
Communication

The YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh communicates in a variety of ways. To stay up to date on current events, meetings, or programs please be sure to check emails and social media. You may also register to view the Google Calendar by scanning the QR code below.

Commitment to Safety

At the YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh, the safety and well-being of youth and families is always our top priority.

All adult program participants are required to sign the Disclosure Statement and the Youth Code of Conduct. Volunteer Leaders are additionally required to obtain the PA Child Abuse History Clearance, PA State Police Criminal History Clearance, and the FBI Criminal History Clearance. The YMCA understands that child abuse and the inappropriate contact of youth is a pervasive problem that must be managed in a proactive manner if we are to protect those in our programs. Abuse of any kind will not be





tolerated, and confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal from this Y. The organization will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require an investigation.

Many safety practices fall into the category of Child Abuse Prevention. Child abuse can and must be prevented from happening while in our programs. Child abuse can be perpetrated by staff, volunteers, and by other participants. Therefore, it is important to know what it is and to identify appropriate methods of prevention.

**Child Abuse is manifested in five basic forms. These include:**

- Physical Abuse is when bodily harm is deliberately and/or intentionally inflicted upon a child.
- Emotional Abuse can occur when bodily harm is threatened, deliberately and intentionally inflicting a child with fear. Personal demeaning statements can also constitute emotional abuse.
- Neglect is when food, medical care, affection, and education are deliberately and intentionally withheld to the detriment of a child.
- Sexual Abuse – any sexual contact with a child is sexual abuse. It includes fondling, intercourse, incest, exposure to pornography, and sexually explicit conversation.
- Ritual Abuse can include all of the previous forms of abuse perpetrated on a child as a form of initiation rite by a person or group in a position of power.

If a child reveals that he or she is a victim of child abuse, or if suspicions of child abuse arise, be calm and show concern. Believe the child. Do not make judgments. Immediately report claims or suspicions to the appropriate YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh staff. Mandated Reporters have a legal obligation to report any suspicion of child abuse to the authorities. Reports can be made directly to ChildLine by calling 1-800-932-0313. The Department of Social Services will determine the accuracy of the report.

Child-to-child sexual behaviors can include inappropriate touching, exposing body parts, using sexualized language, making threats of sexual activity, engaging in sexual activity, and similar types of interactions. All of these activities are prohibited at the Y.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to a child in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Staff and volunteers shall not initiate sexually oriented conversations with children. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with children. Any form of affection or touch that is unwelcome or unwanted by the child, staff, or volunteer should be respected.

The Y’s physical contact procedures promote a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children and staff. The Y encourages appropriate contact with children, including between children, and prohibits inappropriate displays of contact.

**Example Schedule**

Appropriate and inappropriate interactions at the Y are:

Appropriate Interactions	Inappropriate Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Positive reinforcement</li><li>● Appropriate jokes</li><li>● Encouragement or verbal praise</li><li>● Shoulder-to-shoulder, side, or “temple” hugs</li><li>● Pats on the shoulder, back, or head when appropriate</li><li>● Handshakes</li><li>● High-fives and hand slapping</li><li>● Touching hands, shoulders, and arms</li><li>● Arms around shoulders</li><li>● Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving child in the personal problems or issues of staff and volunteers</li><li>● Secrets</li><li>● Off-color or sexual jokes</li><li>● Name-calling, shaming, belittling, or derogatory remarks</li><li>● Cursing and/or harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate child</li><li>● Full-frontal hugs or kissing</li><li>● Showing affection in isolated areas</li><li>● Wrestling, tickling, lap-sitting, or piggy back rides</li><li>● Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li><li>●</li></ul>



## Expectations of Behavior

- **Supervision:** The adult attending a camp program with a child is responsible for the supervision of that child at all times. The camp or camp staff does assume supervision of children while attending a program.
- **Safety Orientation and Rules:** All activities the camp provides will have an orientation with safety rules and regulations. All self-facilitated activities will have rules that are posted at that location. All participants (adults and children) are expected to adhere to the stated safety rules, barriers, and instructions given.
- **Housing:** All participants will be assigned to a housing location. Any changes to the housing location must be discussed with the YMCA of Pittsburgh staff member running the program. All housing should be tidied prior to leaving.
- **Bathroom/Shower Usage:** Adults and children should not be utilizing shared spaces at the same time. Separate showers and/or bathrooms should be designated. If this cannot be accomplished, shower and bathroom times should be scheduled.
- **Alcohol:** The Y Adventurers program is an alcohol-free environment. We are committed to creating safe, inclusive, and family-centered spaces. Alcohol is expressly prohibited at YMCA events unless otherwise noted.
- **Barriers:** Locks, fences and warning signs on doors, buildings, sheds or areas of camp are there for the safety of camp, participants and staff. All participants must respect those barriers and only enter areas that have been permitted by camp staff at the designated time. This includes waterfront areas that are closed due to a lifeguard not being on duty.
- **Waivers and Check-In:** All participants must check in with the designated YMCA staff person when arriving at camp.
- **Contraband:** Pets, firearms, boats, narcotics, fireworks, or other such contraband of any nature are not permitted to be brought onto camp property.
- **Personal Sports Equipment:** Personal sports equipment must only be used by the owner of the property. Archery or BB equipment must be inspected by the staff member leading the activity prior to being used to ensure it is safe and is appropriate for the designated activity. Archery and BB equipment are only permitted at the designated ranges at open program times. They are not permitted to be used at any other time or location.
- **Parking:** All participants must park and drive only on roads and in designated parking areas.

**Accidents or Incidents** – Parents are responsible for arranging the care for illness, medical concerns, minor injuries & distribution of medications. In case of a medical emergency, you need to call 911 and inform the Y staff, so they can direct the help to your location. Information on area hospitals is available at the office. The YMCA is not responsible for injuries incurred while guests use any personal equipment. Please report any injuries or accidents to a Y staff member.

