Welcome New Dads!

Welcome to the Naperville YMCAs Y Guides, Princesses & Trailblazers program. We currently serve the following communities: Naperville, Lisle, Aurora, North Aurora, Oswego, Montgomery, & Batavia. For almost 50 years, this program has been helping fathers and their children spend meaningful and fun times together. We hope your participation in our program will be a highlight of your child’s early years.

The purpose of this new member’s guide is to provide new dads an opportunity to learn more about the program and to provide tips on how to start a new circle (formerly known as a tribe). If you are joining an existing circle, some of the traditions of that circle may vary slightly from what is outlined here.

The New Member’s Packet Includes:

- New Member Guide (this document)
- Website link to, or a hardcopy of, the Friends Forever: Adventure Guides Handbook
- A Guides or Princesses Patch (circle)
- A Federation Patch (half circle)
- An Induction Patch if mid-year – otherwise you will receive this at the Fall campout (rectangle)

About The Y-Guides & Princesses Program

In 1925, H.S. Keltner brought an Ojibway Native American, Joe Friday, from Canada to serve on the staff of the St. Louis YMCA. Joe Friday spent several years giving lectures, demonstrations, and exhibitions of Native American crafts to enthusiastic groups of both boys and adults. At one father-and-son banquet, the fathers so thoroughly monopolized the Ojibway’s time and attention; the boys could not get near him. That gave Mr. Keltner the inspiration on which to build his father-and-son program. Since the men were as enthusiastic as the boys about Native American lore, it seemed a good starting point for a joint project.

The Guides started as just a father and son program and grew slowly. In the 1960’s, the program was expanded to include fathers and their daughters. For more than 80 years, the YMCA Y Guides and Princesses program has been helping fathers, all across America establish a more meaningful relationship with their daughters and sons. The Naperville program has been active since the early 1960’s and has many rich traditions - the most important being “having fun together.”

In 2001, the board of directors of the National Council of YMCAs (also known as the YMCA of the USA) accepted recommendations from a task force made up of national staff and CEOs of member associations (local Ys) to change the name and thoroughly review the Y-Indian Guides program. They further instructed YMCA of the USA to make the revisions necessary to keep this program relevant and focused on what matters most: the program’s purpose, which is to “foster the father/child relationship.” YMCA of the USA enlisted the help of YMCA
staff and volunteers nationwide to craft an alternative program. YMCA Adventure Guides is the result of a two-year research and development process.

At that time, the Naperville YMCAs Big Teepee Federation worked with the Midwest Soaring Foundation to evaluate our program and practices relating to Native American culture. After thorough review and updates, the program continued to honor Native American culture through respectful use of ceremonies and traditions.

In the fall of 2015, after some public concern regarding another Guides and Princess program in LaGrange, IL, the Big Teepee Federation was strongly encouraged to change its name and discontinue the use of Native American references. In an effort to ensure we are welcoming and serving all members of our communities, our Federation voted to be renamed the Three Owls Federation. Most tribes found nature based names as they transitioned to Adventure Guides circles.

These changes did not impact the main purpose of our program which is to help fathers and their children spend meaningful time together. **Strengthening relationships and building memories has always been and always will be at the heart of our program.**

**Structure of the Three Owls Federation**

A group of Fathers and their Sons and/or Daughters...form a **CIRCLE** (formerly **TRIBE**)

Our circles are united together as an **EXPEDITION**. There is 1 Princess and 1 Guides Expedition. Some circles are co-ed and can be in either of the Expeditions. Each Expedition has an Expedition Chief/Navigator.

The Expeditions unite together as a Federation. The name of our Federation is **THREE OWLS**.

Once a month, the YMCA along with the Federation Council coordinates an event for all circles.

These weekend activities are open to all members and occur outside of your normal monthly circle gatherings. There is no obligation to attend all events. Most Federation events carry an additional fee (some of them are free too!) which includes a patch for your vest. Many
people have found these events (particularly the campouts) to be the best part of their Y Guides/Princesses experience. The scheduled events for this year can be found on our website: www.ymcachicago.org/threeowls

The Purpose of the Program:
“To foster friendship and understanding between father and daughter/son.”

Our Slogans:
Princesses: “Friends Always”
Guides: “Pals Forever”

Tips For Starting a New Circle
The purpose of this program is to help build a stronger bond between you and your child. Time spent with our children is very precious. We want both you and your child to have a good experience in the Y-Guides or Princess program and getting your circle off to a good start is essential. The member handbook will guide you in setting up and running your circle. Here are some highlights or guidelines for a successful circle.

Dad’s Meetings
We cannot stress this enough. Have at least one dad’s-only meeting, before your first circle meeting and the fall campout. Meet at a home, restaurant, or coffee shop. Meet anywhere, but meet; it will save an enormous amount of time, confusion, and boring dad chit-chat at circle meetings when you’re supposed to be spending time with the kids. If you’re a part of a brand new circle, your mentor will help organize the first dad’s meeting. It is crucial that every dad attend this meeting.

A dad’s-only meeting should also be held just before the winter overnight in January and maybe before the Spring Campout in May. Some dads meet separately each month. It’s up to you.

Elect a Reliable Chief/Navigator
Each circle should elect a chief/navigator. This should be done as soon as possible. Being chief should be looked upon as a proud role in the circle. Your child will really think it’s cool that their Dad is “The Chief”. Avoid electing “multiple chiefs” or “rotating chiefs” if at all possible. You may want to have one chief serve for the first four months then elect another member for the remainder of the year. The most successful circles have a natural leader who doesn’t mind taking on the added responsibility. A special “My Dad Is Chief” patch will be provided at the end of the season.

The Chief’s main job is to organize the circle and attend the quarterly Federation Council meetings during the year. The Federation Council meetings start at 7 or 7:30PM and the location varies between the Kroehler Family YMCA (34 S. Washington St., downtown Naperville) or an offisite location of the council’s choosing. Details can be found on the website.

The Chief is also in charge of keeping all members informed of what’s happening. The chief is typically, but not restricted to, someone who has been in the program before. Please report your Chief’s name at the first Federation Council meeting or to your Expedition Chief ASAP.
Circle Meetings
Most circles meet once a month. After comparing schedules you should be able to tell which nights will work best for your circle. At your first dad’s meeting, you should assign dates and homes for circle meetings going out as far as you can. The last meeting should be in May. In your first year, it is best to meet in the homes of the circle members until everyone has had a chance to hold a meeting. Remember to go through the same rituals no matter where you meet.

“What do we do at these circle meetings?” There are recommended guidelines or scripts in your Resource Manual as well as the “Running Successful Adventure Guides Circles” document found on our website.

Everyone should wear their circle vests (vests information is covered later). Each meeting starts with a short ceremony where everyone recites the pledge of allegiance. The role-call is taken by the “Log Keeper.” Kids are then asked to stand, put some money (usually $1) in the “Circle Treasure Box,” and tell the group about a good deed they performed recently. This helps kids to learn public speaking. There is always lots of encouragement and nothing is forced. Then there might be a game, a simple craft, a short story, and then an easy snack with juice. Some circles choose to do more elaborate projects. Other than the recommended ceremonial activities, meeting activities are the choice of the circle members. No one expects anyone to make a big fuss. MOMS DON’T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING. Since there is one dad to each kid, each parent is responsible for their own child(ren).

As the kids get older, circles may choose to have meetings outside of the home or field trips. Alternatives to a home meeting might include bowling, rock climbing, batting cages, local skiing, Naper Settlement, Morton Arboretum, Forest Preserve programs, hikes in Forest Preserves, Native American Museums, etc.

Talk to the children. Do not talk over their heads. The children understand more than you think. Save “dad talk” for dad meetings.

Have the children decorate a stick and call it the “Talking Stick”. Make it a rule that only those holding the talking stick can speak. Honor the tradition and it will work for you.

Make some circle property (Nameplates, Circle candle, Talking Stick, Circle Drum, Circle banner or Map, Treasure Box, Circle Log, etc.) with your child. Circle property is displayed at our campouts.

For Suggested Circle Positions – see the “Forming a New Circle Guide” document on our website

For a Circle Meeting Outline – see the “Running Successful Adventure Guides Circles” document on our website
Choose Thoughtful & Respectful Adv. Guides Nicknames
As described in your resource manual, each child and dad should adopt a program nickname. An example would be “White Fang” and “Yellow Fang” This doesn’t have to be done right away. Talk it over with the other dads in your circle, and then talk it over with your child. Silly or disrespectful names are not to be chosen. Don’t feel you have to come up with a name right away. Dads should sit down with their child and think of an appropriate name together. Choose wisely as you use this name for several years, it will be embroidered on your vest and be remembered for a lifetime.

Crafts
Are you a “crafty” group of dads? Is there a woodworking expert in your midst? What kind of crafts would you like to try? Do you want to do one craft at each meeting or do you want to have one craft span the course of several meetings? The skills of the different dads and the ages of the kids will dictate what type of crafts to try. Maybe you’d rather do crafts individually and bring them to meetings. Talk about your expectations for crafts. Doing crafts at meetings is a program tradition and something kids really enjoy. It should not, however, become a burden to the dads. Hint – for younger circles...keep it simple. If a craft is too complicated, the dads end up finishing it not the kids.

Phone & Email
Make sure you have each other’s home and work phone and e-mail addresses. Most Y-Guides/Princess dads agree that e-mail is the best method of communicating circle news.

No Dad-No Kid
Make a big deal of the Parent/Child relationship. Do not compromise on the issue of dads (or another relative) being present at all events. Make this your rule: “No dad - No kid.” No matter how close a child is with his neighbor or friend, it is unfair to the other fathers and defeats the purpose of the program.

Read the Monthly E-news
We send out a monthly e-news newsletter from the Three Owls Federation. Upcoming events, calendar items/reminders and program stories are among the topics included. Be sure to include your email when registering so you receive the e-news OR you can go to our website www.ymcachicago.org/threeowls and fill out the “Join our E-news” area on the lower right of the home page.

We are always looking for stories from our Federation and we urge you and your children to submit articles to the program office for publication. Memories of past events, favorite things to do with dad, reports about your circle are all things kids might want to write about. We place pictures from our events on our Facebook page, on our website and sometimes in our promotional materials. Send us pictures of you and/or the kids while at any Y G&P event throughout the season, and they just may get included in one of our publications. Please email these stories & pictures to Polly Rhodes at prhodes@ymcachicago.org
Participate in the Honor Circle Program
One of the reasons many dads enjoy our program is because it lacks the competitive nature that they find in many other kid programs in town. We do feel, however, that a “low-key” honor circle program can help make the program fun. With that in mind, we are continuing the honor circle idea this year. Points are awarded for attendance at Federation Council meetings and Federation events, participation in community activities, submitting articles for our e-news, etc. Circles with the highest point totals will receive an Honor Award patch and recognition at the Spring Campout. There will be more information about Honor Circles in the upcoming e-news and on our website.

Registering for the Program & Events
Registration for the Y Guides, Princesses and Trailblazers program is on an annual basis. Our program year runs on a school year calendar. You must register for the current school year’s program in order to be able to register for Federation events. All registration is priced per person – each dad and child must register for the annual program and any subsequent events they wish to attend.

We know everyone is busy so we offer a variety of ways for our members to register for our program and events.

1. You may e-mail, or stop in at any of our local YMCA branches (Kroehler Family and Fry Family YMCA locations) to register using our paper registration form.
2. Register online from the comfort of your own home! To register online, please visit our website and click the register button in the upper right hand corner. Our programs should show up automatically. If they do not, you can search for them by selecting Family Programming at the Kroehler Family YMCA. Please note that it is important to use the correct email and password associated with your YMCA account when registering online. If you do not know your login credentials, please contact our program office for assistance.

Fall Campout Highlights
Our annual Fall Campout is held in mid-October at YMCA Camp MacLean, Burlington, WI. We offer cabins or tent sites for accommodations. See more at http://www.ymcachicago.org/maclean/

On Saturday night, just after sundown, we’ll be having our big torch parade followed by a terrific bonfire induction ceremony for all new members. This is one of the big highlights of the year so try to make it. Each circle is asked to make a torch, see the instruction below. We will supply the kerosene, you supply the torch and toilet paper roll. **Do not let your child carry the torch**; it must be carried by an adult for safety reasons.

Following the bonfire, we have a “critter hunt” where kids look for a scattering of small plastic toys in the grass. It is well after dark, so be sure to bring two flashlights with fresh batteries. We also suggest you bring some critters from home and put them in your pocket to use in the event your child strikes out during the critter hunt (even though we buy way too many!).

Quiet time begins at 10:30 PM. Many Guides and Princesses hit the hay early leaving time for the dads to get to know one another around the campfire. **Remember the no alcohol policy.**
Fall Campout - What to Bring

If you’ve never camped before with your child, this might be a great place to start. The Y does not provide camping equipment. Many dads find that they can borrow just about everything they need and supplement that with a trip or two to Target or Wal-Mart. You’ll see all kinds of equipment at these campouts and it might give you an idea about what to buy in the years to come. Each dad/kid is responsible for a tent and sleeping bag (unless you opt for the cabins!). Bring extra blankets in case it gets cold. Each circle should plan out meals and divide up costs. The main meals are dinner and snacks on Saturday night, and breakfast on Sunday morning. Saturday lunch is usually left up to the individuals due to the varying arrival times. See the list below, for suggestions of other things to bring.

- Tent, poles, ropes, stakes, rubber mallet, and a tarp for under the tent. (not needed for cabin campers)
- Pillows, air mattresses or foam pads, sleeping bags and blankets – it can get chilly (cabin campers have beds but will want pillows and bedding)
- Lantern & Stove - check to see if other dads are bringing their stoves and lanterns
- Weber grill - optional but very helpful for hot dogs, etc.
Firewood can be purchased at locations around Camp MacLean. **Remember to bring your own if needed.**

- Matches - butane lighter is best
- Two flashlights - check the batteries. Bring one for you and your child. Use during critter hunt.
- First Aid kit
- Cooking utensils - don’t forget something for coffee
- Plates, cups, glasses, plastic utensils, jug for water
- Food - use your imagination. The circle decides what to cook together. Bring your own drinks and snacks. Kids love hot chocolate at night and marshmallows.
- A lawn chair for each person
- Cooler
- Personal items: soap, tooth brush, tooth paste, wash cloth and towels, comb.
- Warm clothes - don’t be bashful, bring plenty including a complete change of clothes for the kids. Extra socks and shoes too in case they get wet
- Comfortable walking shoes.
- Bug spray, Sunscreen
- There will be indoor bathrooms available on location.
- Recreation items - Football, wiffle balls, mitts, etc. just in case you have time.
- Vests, Circle property & Banner - New circles should bring something to help mark where they are camped.
- Torch (see instructions above)

**YMCA No Alcohol Policy**

The YMCA accepts its responsibility to create an environment where models of acceptable behavior support responsible use of alcohol. The YMCA discourages its staff and volunteers, as role models, from consuming alcohol in the presence of minors at any YMCA sponsored activity. Translation:

- Do not serve alcohol at circle meetings
- Do not bring alcohol to campouts or other Federation events

This policy will be enforced by the YMCA. Please don’t risk future participation in events.

**Where to buy vests and crafts**

Local stores like Hobby Lobby carry craft projects. If you Google “Craft Kits,” you will find numerous opportunities to purchase craft kits as well. Here are a few ideas for supplies:

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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.thepatchstore.com">www.thepatchstore.com</a></td>
<td>CQ Industries Inc. (1-800-537-2824) Best place to get vests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.tandyleatherfactory.com">www.tandyleatherfactory.com</a></td>
<td>Leather crafts, tools, kits and teaching resources.</td>
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Visit us On the Web at www.ymcachicago.org/threeowls

The quickest way to get information about our program is to visit our website. This is the place to go to find the latest news and schedules, get ideas for crafts and circle activities, find links to other Y Guides and Princesses programs and more. We will be adding more content as the year progresses. We would appreciate your feedback.

Did you know...the YMCA is a non-profit organization?

Our cause - We are a powerful association of men, women and children joined together by a shared commitment to nurturing the potential of kids, promoting healthy living and fostering a sense of social responsibility.

We believe that lasting personal and social change can only come about when we all work together to invest in our kids, our health and our neighbors. That's why, at the Y, strengthening community is our cause. Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors throughout Chicagoland to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

Youth Development - Nurturing the potential of every child and teen.

Healthy Living - Improving the nation's health and well-being.

Social Responsibility - Giving back and providing support to our neighbors

Our promise is to never turn anyone away from the YMCA for their inability to pay. The Y's Strong Kids Campaign makes it possible for children, adults, and entire family to participate through membership and programs by providing financial assistance during times of need. We have a responsibility to every member of the community, but especially the children.

A waiver or reduction of fees is available subject to facility and program capacity, and demonstrated need, without regard to race, color, nationality, religion, gender, age, or disability.

The reason we share this information here is twofold:

1. Whether you know someone who might need some assistance with the program to participate or experience a job loss, the Y is here to help. Please contact us to learn more about the financial assistance program.
2. Our scholarship program is privately funded through the generosity of our members and community. If you would like more information on donating to our Strong Kids campaign and/or your employer offers a matching gift program, please contact us so we can assist you or press the Donate button on our website.

Looking for a service project for your circle? You might consider a fundraising project and donate the proceeds to the Strong Kids Campaign!
Who to Call With Questions or Problems
Adventure Guides program office - Polly Rhodes, Adventure Guides Program Director, prhodes@ymcachicago.org and 630.527.6599

Give Us a Call. We’re here to help.
We want your first few weeks in the Y-Guides & Princesses programs to go as smoothly as possible. It’s not easy to start a circle. Sometimes, dads and kids get lost in the shuffle. If you haven’t heard from your mentor, or someone else in your circle, by mid September please call or email the program office.

Thank you for joining the Three Owls Federation!
We are glad to welcome you to our program family!!