YMCA CAMP BENSON
GROUP PLANNING GUIDE

WELCOME TO CAMP BENSON!

Dear Guest,

Thank you for choosing to spend your weekend with us here at YMCA Camp Benson! Our goal is to provide every guest with the best possible modern camping experience. Tucked in amongst the rolling hills of northwestern Illinois, YMCA Camp Benson, is the perfect setting for groups and families to connect with one another and the natural world around them. YMCA Camp Benson offers top-notch accommodations, excellent food service and programs tailored to meet every group’s needs. Our cabins can accommodate up to 180 guests for overnight retreats.

It is our hope that guide helps you prepare for your amazing weekend and gives you a better idea of what to expect from us at Camp Benson.

Sincerely,
Eli Rolli, Camp Director

ABOUT CAMP BENSON

Our 113-acre property located in Mount Carroll, Illinois, 10 miles east of the Mississippi River, is the ideal location for YMCA Camp Benson. The meandering Wakarusa River that winds through camp is perfect for kayaking, tubing and river play. Acres of beautiful deciduous forest offer the picture-perfect setting for outdoor living skills and earth education. Rock climbing and archery are much more enjoyable when done outside in the fresh air. Our state-of-the-art high ropes course and zip line were designed to challenge both campers and adults, all while boosting their confidence.

Our YMCA affiliation means we include the Y’s four core values in every aspect of our programming, demonstrating the importance of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. Our experienced staff and programming promote friendships, positive self-esteem, healthy living and encourage individuality and independence.
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FACILITIES

Cabins: YMCA Camp Benson has 14 cabins, 7 in each village, that were all built within the last five years. Each cabin is equipped with a heating/air-conditioning unit, making them comfortable year round. Every cabin contains 15 beds. There are no restrooms in the cabins.

Bath Houses: Both villages at camp have their own newly remodeled bath house complete with individual showers.

Dining Hall (aka Four Points Lodge): All of our camp meals are served here. If the weather is nice we may have the screened in porch open as a dining area. Restrooms are also located in this building.
CAMP POLICIES

Camp policies are designed to protect the health and safety of all participants in the camp community, and are derived, in part, from the American Camp Association (ACA) standards. Not adhering to camp policies could result in financial penalties or dismissal from YMCA Camp Benson without a refund. All group members must agree to conduct themselves in accordance with all YMCA Camp Benson written and oral policies.

1. Alcohol and tobacco products are PROHIBITED. YMCA Camp Benson is a “smoke-free environment” and further prohibits the use of alcohol, illegal drugs or substances, and other types of tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes and vaporizers. As a contracted group, you agree NOT to bring any alcoholic beverages, narcotics or any unlawful drugs or substances on to camp property. SMOKING IS PROHIBITED ON CAMP PROPER. Smoking will be allowed in the parking lot as long as it is free of other guests.

2. All vehicles must park in the Parking Lot. Vehicles are not permitted to drive to the cabins to unload or park due to heavy foot traffic around camp. Parking space is limited, so carpooling is highly encouraged. YMCA Camp Benson will make wheelbarrows and carts available to help transport your luggage to the cabins.

3. Campfire safety. Designated campfire pits are the ONLY locations were camp fires may be built. Open flames are not permitted indoors. Constant adult supervision is required in those areas at ALL times. Firewood can be ordered from the Do-It Best Store in Mount Carroll by calling (815)–244–1566. They will deliver the wood to Camp Benson and our staff will distribute it.

4. Children must be supervised at all times. Due to the hilly and forested nature of camp, children must be supervised at all times. Please do not let children wonder around camp unsupervised, as this can be dangerous. YMCA Camp Benson and its staff are not responsible for personal injury to guests.

5. Keep It PG. YMCA Camp Benson is dedicated to being an environment where families grow closer together and where children can develop into responsible young adults. Please refrain from swearing and indecent behaviors.

6. Health services are provided by YMCA Camp Benson Staff.
   • A holder of current first aid and CPR certification should be a member of your leadership team. You are responsible for your own first aid.
   • If emergency medical help is needed, dial 9-1-1.
   • Emergency transportation must be available at all times and provided by a member of your group.

7. Firearms, ammunition and other weapons are not permitted at YMCA Camp Benson.

8. No Pets. Guest pets and animals are NOT permitted on the grounds of Camp Benson.

9. Groups must provide, maintain and show proof of comprehensive liability insurance prior to use of any Camp Benson facilities or services. The Sterling–Rock Falls Family YMCA does not provide insurance coverage or benefits for illness or injury to group participants.

10. No exclusive use of camp is implied unless specified in the Rental Contract. Other groups may be present at camp during your stay and every effort will be made to accommodate compatible groups.

YMCA Camp Benson reserves the right to dismiss anyone from camp who does not comply with these policies with no refund. All local, state and federal laws must be obeyed at camp.

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GROUP RESPONSIBILITY

Adult Supervision and Responsibilities: Adults and chaperones are a vital part of group programming and their assistance is greatly appreciated! Providing an adequate number of responsible adults and group supervision are the group’s responsibility. As stated in the Camp Policies section, children are at no time to be left unsupervised by an adult.

We ask that adult guests/chaperones be prepared to assist with the following during their stay:
- Supervision and behavior management during activities.
- Supervise participants in their cabins and at meals.
- Coordination of cabin clean-up.
- Following safety policies and procedures.
- Supervise free-time activities.
- Notify camp staff of any facility issues

Clean-Up & Check-Out: As your stay draws to a close, we ask that you help us maintain a clean camp facility. Please plan time into your schedule on the final day to have your group help clean the cabins and outdoor areas that your group used.
- Groups are expected to sweep their cabins and check under all the bunks for personal items and trash.
- Before checking out of a cabin all lights should be shut off, windows and doors should be closed, and the heater/air-conditioning unit should be turned off.
- Trash bags should be closed and left by the cabin mailbox so they can be collected by our maintenance staff.
- All fires must be put out before the group departs.
- Please report any damages or maintenance issues to the Camp Director before leaving.
- If you get home and realize that you have left something behind, please call us at 815-244-8722 or email our Camp Director at eli@ymcacampbenson.org. We will make it a priority to find the item and return it to you.

CONTACT INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Address</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Fax Number</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16355 Scenic Palisades Rd.</td>
<td>815-244-8722</td>
<td>815-244-8723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Carroll, IL 61053</td>
<td></td>
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YMCA Camp Benson Professional Staff
Eli Rolli | Camp Director | eli@ymcacampbenson.org

For Emergencies
Dial 9-1-1
MEAL PROCEDURES AND OPTIONS

Please let us know the expected number of participants and any food allergies or special needs one week before your retreat. Your group leader will work with the Camp Director to plan out your meals.

- A quick Dining Hall orientation will be given by the Camp Director prior to the first meal.
- Meals are served family style unless other arrangements are made. The food will be distributed to your table immediately before dinner.
- When the table runs out of an item, one person should bring that bowl or platter to the serving window for seconds. “Please” and “Thank you” are always appreciated when asking for things.
- Once dinner has concluded we ask for your help in wiping down the tables with sponges and places the benches on top of the tables.
- We allow groups to cook out on their own for meals. Please let the Camp Director know in advance how many participants will be cooking for themselves to help cut down on food waste for a meal. No grills on the cabin porches please.

TYPICAL MEAL OPTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakfast</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
<th>Dinner</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Eggs, Bacon &amp; Hash Browns</td>
<td>2. Grilled cheese and Soup</td>
<td>2. Pizza and Mozzarella Sticks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each breakfast includes a cold cereal bar, oatmeal, fruit, milk and juice

All lunches include a salad and soup bar.

Vegetables and dessert are always served with dinner. A salad bar will be made available as well.

WHAT TO PACK

Clothing
Please bring old, durable clothing that can get dirty. Closed toed shoes are required for all camp activities. We will run most activities even if it is raining so please pack accordingly. It is recommended that all personal items be marked. Camp Benson is not responsible for damaged or lost personal items.

Bedding and Toiletries
Sleeping Bag *(bedding is not provided)*
Extra sheet or lightweight covering
Toothbrush and toothpaste

Pillow and pillow case
Towels and washcloths (2)
Personal toiletry items

Other
Water Bottle
Insect Repellant

Flashlight and Batteries
Sunscreen

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CAMP ACTIVITIES

Flying Squirrel- experience the sensation of flying as you are hauled 30 feet into the air. You will really feel like a flying squirrel (or Superman) as you swing back and forth high above the ground.

Zip Line- take an exhilarating ride through the forest canopy on our 200 foot long zip line.
   * Campers must be 8 years of age to participate.

Rock Climbing- use crags, cracks and ledges to work your way to the top of one camp’s bluffs. Challenge yourself by climbing our set routes on natural rock while one of our professional staff has you on belay the entire time. * Campers must be 8 years of age to participate.

Target Sports- archery, slingshots and throwing tomahawks, oh my. At target sports you will have the opportunity to do all of these things under the cover of our new target sports pavilion.

Twilight Zone- Enter if you dare. You will scream and laugh as you barrel down the hill on a sled through the pitch black Twilight Zone tubes and spill out onto the grass below.

Kayaking- take a peaceful trip down the Wakarusa River which meanders through camp. Enjoy the sights and sounds of the beautiful forest here at Camp Benson while paddling along.

Tubing- lazily navigate the waters of the Wakarusa River all from the comfort of a tube. This is one of the most enjoyable ways to unplug and connect with the natural world around you at YMCA Camp Benson.

Cave Exploration- a hard hat, a flashlight and an adventurous attitude are all you need to explore the Cave. Exploring the cave is one of the most unique and amazing activities we offer.
   * 15 participant maximum per session.

Easy Hike- an easy stroll through the forest affords you the opportunity to immerse yourself in the natural world. On this hike you will have the chance to see wildlife and trek through a natural rock canyon.

Extreme Hike- wade through the river, scramble up a muddy hill, hike along a bluff ridge and drop down into Smith’s grotto where you once again must brave crossing the river. Bring old shoes and clothes because you are most certainly going to get dirty and wet.

Pavilion- basketball, broomball, and rock climbing are all activities that take place in the Merrill Benson pavilion. The pavilion is great for night time activities or as a back-up during foul weather.

Candle Making- create your own unique candles from the comfort of our newly remodeled Arts and Crafts building.

Ga-Ga Ball- many people can enter the Ga-Ga pit but only one can leave victorious. Ga-Ga Ball is hailed as a kinder, gentler variation of dodgeball.

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## SAMPLE SCHEDULE

**Friday**
6:00 pm – 11:00 pm Friday overnighters arrive. Board games and snack in Dining Hall.

**Saturday**
8:00 am – Continental breakfast
9:00-10 am- Nature Hike
1:00 – 3:00 pm Activity Period #1
   - Zip Line, Climbing Wall, Twilight Zone, Cave Exploration
3:15 – 5:15 pm Activity Period #2
   - Zip Line, Climbing Wall, Twilight Zone, Cave Exploration
5:45 pm Dinner @ Dining Hall for those not making their own dinner (*Chicken Fingers, potato, vegetable, and salad bar*)
7:30 pm Campfire @ Amphitheater
8:45-11 pm Pavilion open for Sports

**Sunday**
8:00 am Breakfast @ Dining Hall (*Pancakes, sausage, fruit and cereal bar*)
9:00 – 9:30 am Camp Store open in Basement of Sinissippi Lodge
9:00 – 11:00 am Activity Period #3
   - Zipline, Climbing Wall, Twilight Zone, Target Sports
11:00 am Departure

Unstaffed Activities: Gaga Ball, Athletic Field, Basketball

Dining Hall open until 11pm for Wi-Fi, drinks, snacks, board games.

## DIRECTIONS TO CAMP BENSON

YMCA Camp Benson
16355 Scenic Palisades Rd.
Mount Carroll, IL 61053

**From Sterling, IL:** Follow IL-40 North to Mount Carroll. Turn west onto US-52 and follow for .5 miles. Turn right onto South Mill Rd. and follow for 1 mile. Then turn left onto W. Benton Street, which turns into Scenic Palisades Rd. The entrance to camp located 1 mile down the road on the right hand side.

**From Chicago:** Take I-88 West until you reach the exit for I-39 N/US-51 N to Rockford. Follow I-39 N/US-51 N for 7 miles and take Exit 104 toward I-64 W. Follow I-64 W for 36 miles through the towns of Oregon and Mt. Morris. Then you will turn onto US-52 W which will lead you into Mount Carroll. Turn right onto South Mill Rd. and follow for 1 mile. Then turn left onto W. Benton Street, which turns into Scenic Palisades Rd. The entrance to camp located 1 mile down the road on the right hand side.

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