

CAMPS FOR KIDS CASE STATEMENT

Mission

Camps for Kids was created 12 years ago by a coalition of Milwaukee youth serving agencies, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, and the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, to fulfill a simple and singular mission:

To provide life-changing, first time, resident camp experiences for children from families with limited financial resources.

Remarkable Benefits of the Camp Experience

“I have a conviction that a few weeks spent in a well-organized summer camp may be of more value educationally than a whole year of formal school work.” Charles Elliot, former president Harvard University

A national study of camper outcomes has shown that through the resident camp experience, children grow measurably in

- Social and interpersonal skills.
- Environmental awareness.
- Personal values.

Camps for Kids resolved to make this experience available to many more children from low income families, for whom a week in a natural setting represents a whole new world.

How Camps for Kids Works

Through relationships with neighborhood agencies, churches, schools, and community centers, Camps for Kids seeks out, recruits, and supports young campers in their decision to try resident camping.

Campers are referred to Camps for Kids by more than 40 organizations in the greater Milwaukee area. Campers may choose to attend any of the participating Wisconsin resident camps.

After the first year of resident camp funded by Camps for Kids, CFK campers are encouraged to return to resident camp on full scholarships provided by the camps themselves, so that the positive effects of the camp experience will continue.

Camps for Kids is built on the efforts of its founding partners: The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, and a coalition of youth-serving groups including several youth agencies, resident camps, Milwaukee Public Schools Division of Community Recreation, the Children’s Court Camping Project, and the American Camp Association, Wisconsin Section.

The CFK Steering Committee is composed of representatives from each of these groups plus several community volunteers.

To date this collaborative effort has raised over \$1.1 million and sent 3,315 kids to a first-time resident camp experience. All the kids came from low-income families; more than 75% were children of color. Since many of the CFK funded children return to resident camps year after year, the effect of the Camps for Kids program grows exponentially.

Looking Toward a Stronger Future

For the first several years, the funds raised and the number of children sent to resident camp grew steadily. Over the last few years, those results have leveled off at about \$100,000 and 300 new campers per year.

In response to this plateau in activity, Camps for Kids is working to broaden and stabilize its donor base in the short term, and to create an endowment fund to replace annual fundraising needs in the long term.

Uniqueness of Camps for Kids

Camps for Kids is a **group effort** – not an agency. Camps for Kids represents Milwaukee business and community leaders, agency and camp directors, and public service and foundation representatives all working together to address a common concern.

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