

The Photo News

Sixty Summers of Friendships and Fun

Rosmarins Marks 60th Season of Day Camp

MONROE – Sixty summers ago, a small group of about 65 children took part in a variety of day camp activities on a 100-acre site known as the Wishing Well Day Camp on School Road in Monroe, not knowing that inaugural summer would launch six decades of friendships and fun for thousands of kids.

That same camp, now known as Rosmarins Day Camp, marked its 60th summer season last Saturday with an “anniversary bonanza.” It hosted a day-long event for campers and their families to commemorate those past years and to look ahead to future summers of continued friendship and fun.

A lot of the parents want to know that their kids are in a safe environment and that they’re being watched and most of all that they’re having fun,” said camp director Scott Rosmarin. “But it’s the friendships that they make in camp and the memories they get here that we feel are most important. They (campers) can’t wait to come. We do such good things for the kids.”

During a recent visit, campers ranging in age from 3 to 13 were playing all kinds of sports and other organized activities on fields, playgrounds, in swimming pools and near tiny well-kept cottages, engaged with their friends and counselors and clearly experiencing the fun Rosmarin felt was so important to have at camp.

A Respite From City Life

It all began in 1942 when Rosmarin’s father, Martin, opened a bungalow community of 100 cot-

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Camp Director Scott Rosmarin

tages (which are still rented by vacationers today) on his family’s property. At that time, people from the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and other areas traveled out of the city and upstate to “the colony” for their annual vacations and a respite from city life. Many stayed the entire summer.

“This area was actually the beginning of the Catskills,” said Rosmarin, referring to a time when downstate residents traveled north to cottages and rural resorts to enjoy leisure time. “And one day, my father said, ‘We have all these kids running around and we have to find something to do with them.’”

Seven years later, the day camp opened for an eight-week season featuring sports, swimming in Walton Lake, music, dancing and a wide range of arts and crafts for children aged 4 to 14. At that time, tuition for the full eight weeks was \$80, with an additional \$17 if meals were provided and an additional \$20 if transportation was required.

Today, the eight-week season tuition is approximately \$4,600, including meals, transportation and every conceivable onsite and offsite activity (such as trips to Broadway shows, the Mountain Creek Water Park, movies, bowling, roller skating and inter-camp events).

Enduring Memories

Approximately 350 children from the surrounding areas attend, said Rosmarin. The camp also offers a “Counselor in Training” (CIT) program for kids age 14 and 15, where they work in specialty areas with group counselors.

Though initially known as the Wishing Well Day Camp, the name was changed to Rosmarins in the early 1960s because the thinking was that the name was too “babyish,” Rosmarin said. But, he added, the idea of providing an environment where kids could develop and refine their social skills, self-confidence, experience a variety of activities and sports while making new



This photograph shows campers and staff from 1960, when Rosmarins was then known as Wishing Well Day Camp. Today, those campers would be in their 50s.

The front page of the Aug. 22, 1974, edition of the Advertiser Photo News, this newspaper’s predecessor, shows how much fun these two youngsters are having in a dance class.



friends and having fun never changed at the family owned and operated camp.

Campers like Sugar Loaf resident Gregory Golyakhovsky, 10, return year after year. A five-year camp veteran, Gregory stopped for a very quick chat on his way to play ball.

“I like being able to do all the fun activities,” he said. “At home, you really don’t have that much to do. Here, everything (is) planned out. There’s so many things to do. You can’t have a bad time here.”

For example, for the week of Aug. 4, in addition to regular activities, campers will experience “Mystery Week,” “Puzzle Day,” and “Who Dunit Day.” The 13-year-old girls group will have a “Girls Nite” and there will be an overnight event for eight-year-old boys and girls. Special meals include a pizza day, with pizzas coming from Planet Pizza in Monroe, a Chinese food day with a delivery from the Dragon House in Goshen and BBQ day.

ence at Rosmarins was like being in a world unto itself.

“It’s hard to explain,” said Chambers. “I come back here every year because of the people. I’ve made lifelong friends. I love the interaction. There are few camps in the U.K. and they’re different from here. This becomes my life for three months a year.”

Everyone Cries

Town of Warwick resident Amy Petrassi, a fifth and sixth grade teacher at the Greenwood Lake Middle School and program director for the five to eight year old program, also couldn’t pinpoint what exactly makes camp so meaningful.

“It’s a sub-cultural thing,” she said. “We (campers and staff) all make friendships that we will remember the rest of our lives. We all live in different areas and can’t wait to see each other. It is its own entity. There should be a dictionary word to describe this experience and there isn’t. We really go that extra mile for the kids.”

Founder Martin Rosmarin, who has lived in the same house on the campgrounds since the early 1940s, hoped any child who wanted a camp experience could have it.

As he watched buses getting ready to load kids for their evening trip home, the elder Rosmarin said he felt the values and friendships gained through the camp experience will help kids in their daily lives. He acknowledged that tuition is a big expense, but there are payment plans and early registration discounts.

“I’ve had people coming back after 30 or 40 years telling me what a wonderful experience they’ve had and they remember it to this day,” the camp founder said. “I do think the experience they get here is wonderful. This has been my life.”

Scott Rosmarin, who was an oil trader on the New York commodities exchange before taking over his father’s role as director, paused when asked about the significance of the camp experience to both the children and staff. Tears quickly filled his eyes as he pointed to the buses.

“You see those buses?” he said. “On the last day of camp, everyone is crying...the kids, the counselors, the staff. It’s the bonds that have formed.”



PHOTO BY NANCY KRIZ

Scott Rosmarin chats with these young campers who are explaining to him about their hybrid game of tennis baseball.