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Photo courtesy of Luther Village



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CAMP WASAGA ALL ABOUT FAMILY

For the Free Press

When Luke Barr was young, his parents introduced him to Camp Wasaga, thus beginning a lifelong affinity for the great outdoors he now happily shares with his own children.

Located approximately 275 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg, on the scenic shore of Clear Lake, Camp Wasaga is the province's only Manitoba Camping Association-accredited, full-time family camp. The region's many natural wonders provide an inspiring backdrop for the supervised activities available there and the opportunity to enjoy a fun, affordable family vacation.

"I first attended Camp Wasaga with my family when I was seven years old," says Barr, who now serves on the non-profit camp's volunteer board of directors. "I absolutely loved my time as a kid camper, playing with friends and looking up to the camp counsellors. I can recall my parents making lifelong friendships with other parents, just as I was making lifelong friendships with the children from those families."

Camp Wasaga offers a full slate of family-friendly adventures, for campers of all ages and backgrounds. Mornings might see trained camp counsellors leading a group of children in activities, such as games, nature trail exploration and crafts that emphasize learning and fun in an outdoor setting. Afternoons are reserved for activities, such as hiking, water sports or nature appreciation, which beckon the entire family to join in the festivities.

Camping just would not be the same without a traditional campfire at day's end and so it goes at Camp Wasaga. Guests can enjoy songs and games around the campfire as they relax under a starry sky, far from the hustle and bustle of city life. Afterward, guests retire to one of the 19 onsite cabins, each of which can accommodate three to six people. Group rentals are also available.

"Wasaga is all about family," says Barr. "We strive to develop a true community that

celebrates kids being kids and gives parents an opportunity to relax on their own for portions of the day. Our counsellors are some of the most incredible young adults I have ever met and they work so hard to give children a safe and enjoyable time with us."

Along with planned activities, Camp Wasaga also offers a unique, two-level program called Leaders in Training (LIT) program, which invites youth aged 14 and older to develop their skills as camp counsellors. The program encourages leadership, communication, problem solving and independence, while helping participants build self-confidence. Participants are supervised by a staff member and lodge with camp staff. Program fees for level 1 are \$390 plus GST for a week's stay and training, and \$700 plus GST for the two-week LIT session.

Barr participated in the LIT program in his own youth, helping him toward his future work as a Camp Wasaga counsellor. Though the responsibilities of adult life led him in a different direction for a time, his love of the great outdoors endured, leading him back to Camp Wasaga, this time as an adult with his own family.

"I have always stayed involved with the camp, volunteering for the board and things like that, but it was only about six years ago, that my family joined another couple to return as campers," says Barr. "This is when I really realized why my parents were so committed to Wasaga when I was young. We were able to reconnect, make new friends and foster a true sense of community."

"My wife and I got to go hiking, paddling and biking together and we got to see our children developing the same leadership skills and independence that I experienced as a kid. We now come back every year, during the same week, with the same group of people. We are continually referring the camp to other families and they all seem to love it, coming back year after year. It's just an amazing experience." ●

For more information about Camp Wasaga, visit campwasaga.ca.



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CAMP WASAGA BUILDS LIFE SKILLS AND LIFELONG MEMORIES

By Maryse Gagne

Everyone has fond summer memories. Mine were made during my 11 years at Camp Wasaga.

When I was 10, my mom was looking for activities for us to do as a family. This was difficult as she was a disabled single mother of two. When she heard of a family camp that provided rooms for each family, outdoor activities for the kids, and healthy, delicious meals...sold!

As a kid, camp was incredible. When we weren't in program, we were free to roam on the site and do almost anything we wanted – play games, go for supervised swims! Or just hang out with friends and family.

Camp Wasaga is where I met my best friend Cora. I am always thankful she came to sit with me on the swings, 11 years ago. We have spent our summers together as campers, as Leaders in Training (LIT) – where we learned essential outdoor skills and how to be influential leaders – and as staff members.



Submitted photo

Maryse Gagne having fun at Camp Wasaga.

I worked at camp for five years as Assistant Leader, Senior Leader and finally LIT Leader. LIT Leader was my favourite position, as I got to help young people develop life skills and share my love and knowledge of the outdoors.

This year, I was approached by the Board of Directors and elected as Program Chair. I now live camp every day!

Camp has given me so many things that I value: a love for the outdoors, employment, a best friend, and now a chance to keep improving camp for many years to come.

My journey at Camp Wasaga started 11 years ago – who knows when it will end! ●

Camp Wasaga is an all-inclusive family camp that focuses on fun activities for the whole family.

While our experienced counsellors whisk your kids away for a morning of outdoor fun, take some time to hike, swim, or curl up with a good book.

Afternoons are for families. Go on a self-guided adventure or meet as a group for any number of activities like hikes, games, and water sports.

Experience togetherness with your family and friends in the beautiful outdoors!



Learn more about us at CAMPWASAGA.CA



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