

From my sit spot... “The Mentor”

-- Peter Harranty

While the ‘core routines’ give our mentors a solid framework to manage our camps and keep our campers engaged and excited, without question, the center of gravity in the “Art of Mentoring” process is the *mentor*. Lime Hollow’s leadership team spends a great deal of time recruiting and training our summer camp mentors. For us, the mentor must be passionate about his/her commitment to connecting our young campers to the natural world.

The perfect mentor embodies many different qualities. They have a curious sparkle in their eyes and share a love of learning. They willingly demonstrate their *own* search for knowledge and amazement at finding new things in nature. They must have a passion for some aspect of nature and a willingness to share it with kids. Ideally, when a camper shows interest in any natural object the mentor role models *even more* interest and enthusiasm about the discovery. While full of energy and excitement, our mentors must of course have common sense and a firm commitment to keeping our campers safe. They must demonstrate compassion and caring for others, but also know how to keep themselves healthy. We search for mentors who are not self-centered, but are interested in performing a meaningful role for our community and its members. We look for and encourage our mentors to embrace and work with all the ‘core routines’ of camp. In so doing, each mentor will experience awe and reverence when out in nature. They will have a well-developed feeling of self-sufficiency and a confidence that they can improvise and problem solve when situations call for special skills. A quiet mind and an inner stillness can come from visits to a sit spot, a daily routine we *strongly* encourage here at Lime Hollow.

When putting together our mentor teams for the summer, we take great care in aligning backgrounds and skill sets with each camp. For our “Knee-High Naturalist” Camp, we look for mentors with a background in early childhood education and strong classroom management skills. Our Camp Gracie mentors, however, will have a combination of elementary education experience and strong environmental education skills. Our Camp McLean team will be weighted with mentors with even stronger backgrounds in environmental education, natural history, and/or primitive skills. During our mentor selection process, one of the qualities that we look for is the “spirit of the coyote.” We want our mentors to be playful, creative, energetic, and have a little bit of “trickster” in them. Although we actively seek out mentors with education and environmental backgrounds, we *always* make room for candidates that exude the *coyote spirit*.