

To Parents and campers

From the Director

### **Addressing the culture of Social Media**

Social media, such as texting, Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, have grown into our communities at an astonishing pace and are impacting our culture much like vehicles, airplanes and telephones have in previous generations. These changes which used to reside primarily via access from computers is now even more present in mobile technology, specifically cell phones and communication tools (hand held computers) that are now outpacing technologies or changes at a pace we might not have imagined when computers first came on the scene.

With regard to social networking we are working to help campers and staff understand and maintain safe boundaries with these new technologies. In staff training, great emphasis is placed on reducing “privacy and personal access” to campers. This is intended to prevent opportunities for inappropriate contact with a staff or camper resulting in harm and or injury. The internet, especially with social networking tools such as instant messaging and or cell phone use with access to phone, camera and texting represent a serious challenge for all organizations that work with people and especially minors.

To create a response to these rapid changes we are asking for support from camp staff, parents and campers by using three primary tools: 1. Staff education with clear written policies. 2. Parental involvement using a common sense media agreement for parents and teens (to be used at home) to promote education of parents and campers at home and at camp. 3. The creation of a public user friendly Facebook page for campers and staff that should reduce the need or perceived need of seeking to be a “friend” of everyone at camp.

#### **1. Clear expectations of Staff:**

In 2011 we are introducing new expectations of our staff; we appreciate the assistance from you and your camper in reading and understanding the below protocols for social media. Please note that the diocese has a public Facebook page to help with the first of these new expectations. Please understand that it is not possible for the Diocese of Montana to monitor everyone who is a staff person and their use of technology. Here is where parents can help - if you are aware of behavior that does not mesh with the below guidelines of any of our staff you are encouraged to contact me immediately with specific details of the inappropriate contact.

Staff will be instructed to follow the following protocols for social media:

- Communication between youth/staff and volunteers should be done through the public pages set up by your congregation or the diocese. This approach allows administrators to monitor communication and ensures that staff and volunteers do not have private (and possibly inappropriate) conversations with youth.
- Staff/volunteers turn off the instant messaging features of your social network. Or, let youth know that you are not permitted to “chat” via instant messaging with youth if you are contacted.
- Staff does not text with youth. Also, if any youth send an inappropriate “message” and or picture that you report this immediately to your supervisor.
- Do not post inappropriate pictures or comments on pictures online.
- Do not permit the use of any camera or cell phone in a changing area, which include rest

rooms and or cabins.

**2. Parental Involvement: The common sense media agreement for parents and teens:**

Inserted along with the Health History/Medical Release form and Media release, you will find a sample contract with guidelines on internet use for you and your child to look at. We encourage talking with your child(ren) and making any changes that you feel are appropriate on the sample contract. We thought that this would be helpful since many youth over 13 are active online and with social media such as texting. We suggest you talk with your child(ren) about internet safety, social media, and, cell phone use.

If your child is under the age of 13 you may wish to share the sample guidelines for internet use and discuss internet safety both at home and other locations they may have access to technology (which could be a friend's cell phone).

As Camp Director, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of a parent/guardian spending time with their child/youth discussing safe use of new technology. If you are not up to speed with what new pocket phones can do I suggest you visit a business that sells phones and visit with them.

**3. Development of a public web page that campers/staff and parents can use on Facebook Media Release.**

Camp Marshall is excited to be putting together multimedia projects this summer. This will allow the camp to document and record the activities going on at the camp in a fun new way. Included with this packet you will find a multimedia release which will allow pictures, video, and sound recordings of the campers at camp to be used for promotional purposes by the camp and diocese of Montana. More specifically, it will allow us to use our Facebook page as an appropriate place for campers and staff to enjoy memories of the summer without having to go to multiple Facebook type accounts to see pictures of camp. For added control, the diocesan Facebook page is designed so pictures may only be uploaded by administrators. Please return your media release form with your Health History/Medical Release fourteen days prior to camp to help us develop this resource.

Due to the rapid changes in the way we communicate, we chose to adapt a media release from a school district to use with camp and diocesan events.

We work hard to share fun pictures and videos that tell the story of Camp Marshall on our Facebook page. Thanks to digital technology, campers and staff have the ability to share their pictures with the camp office for us to use to help promote the camp using the best pictures from the whole summer. The camp, however, does not control the use of these media when campers and staff go home. For this reason we ask that both staff and campers be careful and respectful in the use of any image they take while they are at camp. In this, ***there is no substitute for parental involvement***. I would encourage parents who send a youth to camp with a camera to help their camper view and edit pictures for quality and content.

Thank you for your time and assistance with this important issue.

Yours in Christ,

David Campbell  
Camp/Christian Formation Director