

Saying “Yes” to Camp Roosevelt-Firebird

By Cynthia Larsen, Camp Roosevelt-Firebird



My husband Joe and I stopped looking for a summer camp long ago, so when he told me about Camp Roosevelt-Firebird, my first thought was, “Oh no, not again.”

When we visited the camp three years ago, the long road down the hill promised, like any good camp road, that **we were leaving mundane life behind**. And when the road opened out onto the lakeside, the promise was fulfilled.

Roosevelt-Firebird, situated within the Muskingum Watershed on Leesville Lake, has a secluded sense of peace that silences you—from the wetlands near the fishing dock, across the fields to the swim beach, and then up into the woods to cabins and campfires. **When I saw the old red barn, built in the 1890s by the Prescott family, I was sold.**

We bought the 100-year-old camp, and now every summer we fill it with girls and boys from the United States and as far away as Mexico, the Ukraine and China. Our counselors come from nearby and overseas. **Our administrators are mostly full-time educators.**



What parents say about our camp

- “Ruby was more confident, self-reliant, and her social confidence grew at camp.”
- “Camp gave my kids an opportunity to explore their environment, personal limits and learn—all while having fun!”
- “He came home different. More responsible and with a sparkle in his eyes.”
- “I can’t get Kaleb to EVER stop talking about camp.”



Camp Roosevelt-Firebird already had many traditional camp activities, both sporty and artsy. We’ve updated, improved and added more, including **environmental education and a farming program with a vegetable garden, free range chickens and goats, as well as activities for less athletic campers, like creative writing and board games.**

Watching campers experience new opportunities is breathtaking. Last summer, I watched them grow like the trees around them: Lisa, twelve, normally very reserved, led our daily camp gathering; Keith, nine, stayed on the beach for the first few days of swimming lessons, but eventually made it through the squishy mud, relinquished his noodle, put his face in the water and began to swim. **Finding courage and taking safe risks in a supportive environment is what camp is all about.** It happens every day: at the zip line or in a canoe, floating down a nearby river or holding a chicken for the first time.

But camp is more than activities. **Camp is a community, which we make as caring and intentional as we can.** Our campers come from traditional and nontraditional families and from diverse backgrounds. From the first hour, counselors help campers connect with each other. When campers suffer from homesickness, everyone supports them. Sometimes a camper needs a little extra attention, and that may come from a friend, a counselor or a camp administrator. **I’ve learned that the best cure for homesickness is company, keeping busy and time (what a difference a few hours make).**

Just as I traveled down that road, three years ago, as my thoughts changed from “Uh-oh” to “Yes!” our campers travel the same road, taking anywhere from an hour to a couple of days to find their “Yes!” And finding their “Yes!” is more than just finding new friends, it’s embracing the quirkiness within themselves and each other. Joe and I love best those moments when campers see the greatness in someone’s crazy idea, when a seven-year-old improvises an entire song in nonsense syllables or when a nine-year-old runs for camp president against 14-year-olds—and wins!

We are looking forward to sharing new experiences and new “Yes!” moments with our campers and staff in 2018. We invite you to drive down our camp road to see if Camp Roosevelt-Firebird is what you are looking for. ■



4141 Dublin Road SW | Bowerston, OH | 740-269-0137 | camprooseveltfirebird.com