

# **CHAPERONE INFORMATION**

## **What is McDowell Environmental Center (MEC)?**

Our non-profit, educational organization provides outdoor learning experiences for school groups in the forests, canyons and streams of beautiful Camp McDowell. Camp McDowell, an Episcopal summer camp since 1947, has hosted hundreds of thousands of children over the years. The environmental program is completely nonsectarian and is offered to all students regardless of race, religion, ability, or gender.

It is the philosophy of the MEC that experiencing nature first-hand can lead to a lifelong awareness and respect for the natural world. At McDowell Environmental Center, our professional instructors share a love of nature with students in outdoor classrooms. The ratio of one instructor for every twelve students promises safety as well as a personalized learning experience - with plenty of fun, adventure and increased confidence. By working together in field groups, cabin groups and in the dining hall, students also learn about living in a community.

## **Cabins**

- Each cabin is a sturdy, clean, and well-maintained cement-block cabin with 12-18 single beds. The cabins hold about 10-16 students and 1-2 adults, and have split units for heat and AC. Each cabin has a bathroom with 2 sinks, 2 toilets, and 2 individual showers.
- Establish guidelines for the students about what you expect of them: shower times, lights out time, no raiding, respecting other students' belongings, keeping their area clean, etc.
- We ask that you do not bring any food to the cabins which might attract critters.
- Remind students to pack up their belongings, sweep out the cabin and move their luggage to the appropriate pick-up area in the morning before breakfast on the final day.
- Talk with the students to build rapport. Ask them about what they have been doing, and show an interest in them. If you build a strong rapport, they will be more likely to listen to you.

## **Food & Meals**

- Meal times are also educational opportunities at McDowell. We teach the importance of lowering our food waste in a non-competitive manner.
- Our dining hall serves nutritious, kid-friendly meals, which we eat family-style. At the table, encourage good table manners.
- Let the students help with the work at the table- it encourages responsibility! Be a role model during announcements by listening and encouraging students to be quiet and listen as well.

## **Safety and Medications**

- The safety of the students is paramount at McDowell. A registered nurse lives on-site and our Health Hut is equipped to handle first aid and other routine health care needs. All of our instructors are certified in First Aid and CPR.
- In the event of an emergency, the school and McDowell personnel will make the decision to transport a student to the hospital in Jasper, 15 miles away.
- All medications will be kept and dispensed by the nurse unless your school has made other arrangements. If a child who experiences severe allergic reactions or asthma is placed in your field group or cabin, you may be expected to carry that child's inhaler or epi-pen.
- Be aware of the students in your cabin or field group who take routine medications, and discreetly remind them to visit the nurse with a buddy.
- We monitor the weather closely, and during severe weather, we have an emergency plan that includes tornado shelters.

## Classes

- The teacher from your school has chosen the classes your students will be taking, based on their goals for the visit. Actively participate in the classes. Your enthusiasm can often motivate students!
- Be sure that students always have their water bottles during class and activity time.
- Everyone must wear sturdy, closed toed shoes outside of the cabin, no crocs.
- MEC Instructors supervise during classes. Chaperones are responsible for supervision of students at all other times, including assisting with supervision at Recreation time.
- If a student is being particularly disruptive, we ask that you stand near the student and help them refocus.
- Please contribute any particular information that pertains to your home community. You are a valuable resource!

## Canteen & Recreation

- Keep tabs on your field group during canteen (snack) time. Unless they have special permission, students are not allowed to go back to their cabins during canteen. No one is to stay in the cabin at Recreation (recess) time unless decided by your lead teacher.
- Chaperones are responsible for students during Recreation time. There will be a McDowell Instructor present in two places for emergencies, however Chaperones are responsible for supervision of students.

## Example Schedule

*For 2-day/1-night trips, disregard "Day Two"*

<u>DAY ONE</u>	<u>DAY TWO</u>	<u>DAY THREE</u>
10-11 Arrive, move into cabins	8-9 Breakfast	7:15-8 <i>Clean up, pack up, &amp; move out of cabins</i>
11-12 Welcome Meeting (Mon)	9-12 <b>Morning Class</b>	8-9 Breakfast
12-1 Lunch	12-1 Lunch	9-12 <b>Morning Class</b>
12:45 Welcome Meeting (Wed)	1-4 <b>Afternoon Class</b>	12-1 Lunch
1-4 <b>Afternoon class</b>	4-6 Canteen & Recreation	1:00 Depart
4-6 Canteen & Recreation	6-7 Supper	
6-7 Supper	7:15-9 <b>Night Program &amp; Snack</b>	
7:15-9 <b>Night Program &amp; Snack</b>		

**Please Note:** Student field groups will rotate through all the class selections chosen by the Lead Teacher. Everyone, including adults, will have canteen and will be able to choose a drink and snack. It is the responsibility of the chaperones to supervise the students during canteen *and* recreation times. Staff will be available in two spots for emergencies during recreation time.

# CHAPERONE LETTER



Dear Chaperone,

Thank you for agreeing to accompany students on their exciting trip to McDowell. As a chaperone, you will play an important role in creating a fun, safe and non-competitive learning environment. You make this trip possible, and for that we are grateful. We would like to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about your role as a chaperone. Please read the *Chaperone Information* sheet accompanying this letter for details concerning the trip to the McDowell Environmental Center.

The lead teacher from your school will assign you to a cabin of 10-12 students to supervise at night and a field group of 10-12 students to supervise during the day. You will be with the students the entire time during your stay. You are directly responsible for the safety and supervision of your field group and cabin group.

During classes, the McDowell Instructor will be directly responsible for the group, but they will rely on you for support and attentiveness. Please actively participate in all classes and activities that you attend. Look forward to active classes which may include hiking, wading in a stream or exploring the night time forest without a flashlight. We appreciate your enthusiasm during these classes, as it can be a great motivator for the students!

## Here are some general policies for adults:

- Chaperones may keep personal medicines and/or their *own* child's medicines with them, but medications must be on your person at all times-or locked in your vehicle. No medicines may be left unsupervised in the cabin.
- Smoking or vaping is not allowed indoors or in front of students. Alcohol is not allowed.
- Try not to use your cell phone around the students. When children call home, they often experience homesickness afterwards.
- Corporal or harsh verbal punishment is not allowed. If you experience difficulty managing the student's behavior, speak to their teacher for help. In cases of extreme student misconduct, such as fighting, the school's lead teacher may decide to send a child home.
- When you come to McDowell, it is most likely that you will share our campus with other schools. We believe positive interactions among all participants create potential new friendships. Please be a model of respect to the other schools, both children and adults.
- Chaperones are responsible for supervising the students during Recreation (Rec) Time, during meals and in cabins each day.

Thanks for taking the time to read this letter and for agreeing to be a chaperone. Please feel free to call us if you have any questions. We look forward to meeting you!

Meredith Donaldson (she/her), Director  
Kim Corson (she/her), Assistant Director

205.387.1806 ext. 108  
[pc@campmcdowell.org](mailto:pc@campmcdowell.org)