

Pitch a Tent

Ah, life at camp—the camaraderie, the swimming and sports, the talent show, the crush you had on your camp counselor. Life was bliss at camp...that is, except for us. For many of us queer boys, the camp experience was anything but bliss—the hazing, the name-calling, the ostracizing, the crush you had on your camp counselor.

Luckily, all that has changed. Now, there's **CAMP!** An event hosted by **Boyz in the Woods** and **Q-Squared**, CAMP revisits the camp experience for adult gay, bi and trans men and—*whoa!*—have things changed! Set up very much like the old camping experience—with workshops, activities, “tribes,” talent shows and lots of cute guys—this camp not only allows you to be queer as folk, it encourages it!

For the past 11 years, CAMP has met during Labor Day weekend at a campground in the midst of Gifford Pinchot National Forest, not far from Mount St. Helens in Washington. Here, around 150 queer men enjoy a weekend of safe fun and frolicking!

Joe Vollmer, a 43-year-old gay Seattle native and “head boy” for **Boyz in the Woods**, explains, “At CAMP, you can do what you want in a safe retreat environment removed from the attitude and pressures of city life.” There are workshops on everything from life drawing to flirting to Drag 101, and activities include hiking, sports, kite flying and star gazing.

“CAMP is founded on five values or ‘virtues,’ as we call them,” Vollmer says. “They are self, respect, growth, celebration and community. We believe those virtues are universal to everyone. CAMP makes me optimistic about the gay community.”

CAMP is a place for queer men to build lasting friendships, to learn more about who we are and to encourage a stronger sense of community. Tolerance and diversity are keywords here, and “being different” is actually a good thing!

“Evenings are pretty special,” Vollmer says. “We have a dance on Saturday night. This year’s theme is a toga party we’re calling ‘Gai Pompeii.’ Personally, my favorite night is Sunday night, which is when we have our talent show. The sheer talent and creativity that is part of our community is phenomenal.”

This year’s CAMP is going to be great—volleyball, hiking, the company of other queers and who knows? Maybe a crush on your camp counselor? Only this time he might have a crush on you, too!

CAMP convenes from Sept. 1 to 4. The cost, including meals, is \$175. To register call 206-984-CAMP or visit www.qcamp.org.

—Glenn Scofield Williams



CAMP encourages queer men to revisit the old camping experience every Labor Day weekend.