

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) ABOUT CIRCLE V RANCH SUMMER CAMP**

### **1. What is Circle V?**

Circle V Ranch Camp is one of the many special works of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Council of Los Angeles. During the summer, the Circle V serves children ages 7-13 by providing eight, 6-day/5-night sessions of resident “sleepover” camp at a minimal cost. College students and education professionals from across the country staff our camp, and show their deep care about children and share a common goal: to make a positive impact on our campers. The Circle V Ranch is located on 30 acres in the Los Padres National Forest in the Santa Ynez Valley across from Cachuma Lake, just 20 minutes inland from Santa Barbara.

### **2. Is Circle V a part of the American Camp Association (ACA)?**

Circle V Ranch is an ACA “Accredited Camp,” having met the standard of the American Camp Association, and is reviewed every three years.

### **3. What activities are offered at Circle V Ranch Camp?**

During the summer resident “sleepover” camping season, Circle V Ranch offers kids 7-13 years old such activities as:

- Swimming (outdoor pool)
- Hiking
- Nature appreciation and conservation activities
- Arts and crafts
- Drumming Circle
- Reading Programs
- Painting
- Archery
- Campfire programs
- Sports (soccer, baseball, basketball, volleyball)
- Recreational games (miniature golf, ping pong, foosball)
- Different theme every session from “Carnival” to Super Heroes and more
- Field trip to the beach
- Skits, singing and much more!

Along with the typical summer camp experience, campers can benefit from the leadership of our carefully selected staff. Activities and programs are all geared to help children learn self-esteem, promote the value of education and provide the skills necessary to be successful in life.

### **4. What is needed to insure that my child is enrolled?**

You and your child must, first and foremost, agree to the camping experience, commit to going to camp (the child’s role), and to sending your loved one (the parent’s role). Participants in the program (parents and children) are urged **not** to “try it and if you don’t like what you see, come home,” but to understand that the experience is designed for the complete week of camp. Once you agree to this, make every effort to sign your

child up and complete the necessary forms required for each camper. Ask questions. If your child is coming to camp with an outside agency, make sure you are clear about their requirements and drop-off and pick-up times. Again, ask questions and get answers.

### **5. What are the necessary form and permission slips my child will need to have completed prior to camp?**

You must first submit your completed registration via online or mail application along with payment. All campership forms must be filled out completely to ensure your child is accepted and granted a campership if needed. The medical history card and physical examination can be mailed at a later date or turned in to a staff member at our Camp pick-up bus stops. It is of the utmost importance that you carefully fill out all required information and questions. Details such as allergies, medications, or restrictions are extremely important so that our health office is able to give the best care possible for your child. Upon receipt of these forms, if your child is accepted, you will receive a confirmation letter along with a list of items to bring to camp.

### **6. What will my child need to bring to Circle V Ranch Camp?**

Your child will need a sack lunch for the trip to camp, for starters. Your child will be engaging in a lot of activities while at camp, warranting plenty of clothes in itself. However, the average temperature can range from 50 degrees at night up to 90 or 100 degrees during the day. With swimming, recreation period, hiking and such, kids can go through clean clothes quickly, as you know. Please limit your child to two pieces of luggage. The following is a list of items and recommended clothing (included in the count is what your child will wear to camp):

- 6 pairs of underwear
- 5 pairs of socks
- 3 pairs of pants
- 3 pairs of shorts
- 6 t-shirts
- 1 light – jacket
- 1 sweatshirt or sweater
- 2 swimming suits
- 1 pair of closed toe shoes
- 1 pair of sandals
- 2 pairs of pajamas
- 2 towels

#### **Toiletries (in a small bag):**

- Unscented soap
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Comb or brush
- Shampoo
- Unscented deodorant
- Sunscreen
- Unscented (unflavored) Chap Stick
- Water bottle

- Flashlight
- WARM SLEEPING BAG AND PILLOW

All packed in a soft “duffel” bag that your child can easily carry and handle. Be sure your child brings a warm sleeping bag. We have found that two small bags are much easier to handle for campers than if all the belongings are packed together in one big bag. Please don’t send your child’s belongings packed in a trash bag, large trunk or hard suitcase. These are difficult to pack in the luggage compartments and difficult for your camper to carry. We recommend that the camper’s name is clearly marked on any item you want returned if lost, particularly on the outside of their luggage.

### **7. What NOT to bring to camp?**

The following items are not needed at camp that we have prohibited campers from having them for a long list of reasons:

- Weapons (of any type)
- Fireworks (or anything of the type)
- Alcohol
- Drugs / Controlled substances
- Toys (but small stuffed friends are OK)
- Any video-type games
- Walkmans/Radios/CD players/iPods/Cell Phones/Ipads/Tablets
- Matches or lighters
- Tobacco or similar products
- Marking pens
- Pets
- Money

Any of these items can earn your child an early trip home at your expense! Your help is needed here. Know what your child is bringing to camp!

### **8. What about damaged and/or lost articles?**

There is no need for your child to bring anything to camp that either of you will regret should it never return. If your child is able to do without it, don’t send it to camp. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Circle V Ranch Camp is not at the cutting edge of the fashion world. Do NOT send the best of clothes, towels, or personal belongings. The truth is, they may not return or they may be damaged. The camp cannot be responsible for any articles not returned with your child. On a similar note, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul will need to bill you should your child damage camp property. This includes (but is not limited to) the practice of graffiti, should your child choose this type of behavior.

### **9. What about the medication my child takes? What should I do about it?**

Circle V Ranch has an experienced Camp Health Manager nurse on staff to administer medication. All medication should be turned in to the camp staff prior to departing for camp. Please do NOT pack medication in your child’s luggage.

The nurse will administer medication as prescribed by the doctor’s instructions directly marked on the medication. The nurse cannot administer any over-the-counter medicine without the clearly written permission from you or your doctor completing the physical examination portion of the “Health History Form.”

Over the Counter Medicines you may approve are:

- Benadryl
- Children's Tylenol
- Cough Drops

#### **10. How will I get back something my child might leave at camp?**

Should we find something (that is clearly marked) left behind; we will make every effort to get it returned. Items will be returned to our LA office within 7 days' time for you to pick up. Again, the best approach is not to send anything you really need back and to stress to your camper to be responsible for his or her belongings.

#### **11. Where will my child sleep, eat, change clothes, and shower?**

Circle V Ranch Camp is equipped 16 log cabins as well as conventional canvas tents for your camper to enjoy. These cabins and tents will be their home for the week and shower and rest room facilities are located nearby every one. Three meals and a snack are served each full day at camp in the Dining Lodge (also known as the Chuck House.)

#### **12. Will my child need to bring money to camp?**

No, money is not needed at Circle V. We do not have a camp store, so there will not be any opportunities for your child to spend money, ever. For this reason, we advise that you do not send any money with your child.

#### **13. What about camp fees?**

Fees are necessary to support and maintain Circle V. Friends of Circle V donors and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul staff and volunteers have worked all year to raise the necessary funds to conduct our camp. We ask families to contribute a "Fair Share Fee" of \$78 per camper (less than 20% of the actual cost). We think your camper is worth it. If you can contribute more, your donations would be greatly appreciated. If this fee is a hardship and will prevent your child from attending camp, please call the camp office for additional financial assistance in the form of "Camperships" provided by donors. These funds are limited and are given out on a first, come first served basis.

#### **14. Is there any financial aid available?**

Yes. We here at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul never want money to be an issue when sending your child to camp. St. Vincent de Paul staff and volunteers work hard to raise the difference. If your child was not attending camp, you would probably be spending at least \$50 on them in the city. That being said, if money is still an issue, we have different ways you can subsidize your camper's fee, such as participation in our fundraising events. Please let us know.

#### **15. Can I get a refund?**

Unless your child is sick and needs to miss out on the camping experience for health reasons, a refund is not possible. This is due to the fact that when your child is signed-up for camp, a specific spot is reserved for them. A bunk in a cabin, programming and craft supplies, and food is bought and expenses need to be paid. No other camper will be able to go to camp should your child not show up on departure day. Not only is this

unfair to other children who would have liked the opportunity to attend camp, but last minute changes make this practice expensive and difficult. The same holds true if your child is sent home for any reason other than their own health. We talk about this in more detail when asked about discipline later in this FAQ. The bottom line? NO REFUNDS!

#### **16. What qualification does the staff have who are in charge of my child?**

The leadership staff at Circle V Ranch is chosen through an extensive search process, but in fact ,our core leadership staff has been together now for many years. All leadership and counselors are college students and education professionals from throughout the U.S. Activity leaders and lifeguards all hold current certifications from a nationally recognized organization. The counselors are selected through a thorough application process and are trained prior more than 8 days prior to the beginning of camp. Their training includes, but is not limited to, child development, conflict management, First Aid and CPR as well as programming activities.

#### **17. What is the camp's policy on camper discipline?**

Obviously, this is a concern of both you and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul personnel. Our staff members are strictly forbidden to:

- Use physical force for any reason.
- Restrain or physically control your child for any reason other than one that poses danger to the camper or someone else.
- Verbally or psychologically abuse your child.
- Punish your child

That being the case, one might ask what we do when a camper demonstrates behavior that is harmful, wrong, out of line, against expressed rules of camp, anti-social, abusive to others, or in general, bringing negative attention to themselves.

While we will not punish your child, there are consequences for their actions. Generally, we have a “three check” policy. The first violation will result in speaking with the leadership of the session. Should the behavior continue or develop a pattern that the staff find disruptive to the quality of the camping experience for others, we will call YOU, the parent, and inform you of the difficulty we are having with your child. This constitutes the second “check” and we will inform you that if the behavior continues, you will need to make transportation arrangements back home for your camper.

The third occurrence “check” or continued unacceptable behavior will result in an early trip home. Your child will be isolated from the other campers and will wait until you have made your arrangements to transport them home. If no transportation is readily available, we will transport your child at an expense to you. This is a relatively expensive trip. Expenses will include the cost of fuel and the expense of 2 staff members who will accompany your child. Remember, there are no refunds. It is a good idea to make sure your child realizes the financial consequences of their inappropriate actions.

#### **18. Where do I drop off/pick up my child and what time?**

Circle V Ranch Camp will make all transportation arrangements to and from camp from bus pick up locations. We have pick locations in downtown Los Angeles, Encino, Oxnard and Santa Barbara; other locations and options may be available—please ask!

**19. How can I make sure that the leader in charge of my child knows everything they should about my camper?**

The best way is to complete the Circle V Ranch Camp application form. On the back of this form, there is plenty of space for you to elaborate on special instructions and helpful hints regarding your camper. Look at it in terms of what information you would want to leave with your baby-sitter if you were leaving for a week. The more we know, the better we can be at making the camping experience the most positive it can be.

**20. Who do I call if we have an emergency and need to contact my child?**

You will be given an emergency number in your registration materials and confirmation letter. This number should only be used in a TRUE emergency. The Camp office number is 805-688-5252. Of course, you are always welcome to call our main office at 323-224-6213 during normal business hours and our office staff can help assist you.

**21. Should I be concerned about homesickness?**

We definitely are. Although there are no known cures for homesickness, the staff at Circle V Ranch has come to recognize the symptoms, and avoid the causes. We all react differently when we leave home the first couple of times. Some of us don't want to leave after we've planned to go for so long. Others don't want to be at camp before we even get off the bus. Usually, in a very short period of time, we adjust and camp starts to take a life of its own—one that we start finding to be new and exciting. What we find we can't control is a condition we have come to call "Campsickness." This happens when a parent starts showing signs of missing their child who is at camp. Remember, the emergency number is ONLY for true emergencies. Write often, fax letters, and plan something special for when you pick your camper up.

**22. Where is the nearest hospital?**

Should your child sustain an injury or illness that is more than our full-time on-site Health Manager can handle, we will transport them to either the Sansum Clinic or the Santa Ynez Valley Cottage Hospital—both are in Solvang, only 12 miles from camp) and notify you immediately.

**23. Is my child going to be safe at Camp?**

Every possible effort is made to insure the safety of your child and their camping experience. As an "Accredited Camp" (meeting the standards of the American Camping Association), Circle V Ranch meets and/or exceeds the standards of the industry. All the facilities at Circle V Ranch are equipped with smoke detectors. The swimming pool, the commercial kitchen facility, and the camp as a whole are inspected by the County of Santa Barbara Environmental Health Services frequently. We do not take this responsibility of entrusting your child to us lightly, and we appreciate your trust.

**24. Can I come and visit Circle V Ranch during the camp session?**

We have found over the years that parents who visit their children during the camp session serve more to disrupt the campers' experience than to contribute to it. The resulting effect is that your child will want to go home with you, and rightfully so. We know we make a positive impact on campers, but we can't come close to the love and adoration of Mom and/or Dad. For these reasons, it is best for everyone if you refrain from visiting while your camper is in session. Remember, both you and your child need to agree to the camping experience. However, if you would like to visit our facilities and observe how we run our camp when camp is not in session, please contact us and we can make the necessary arrangements for a tour.

### **25. Can I call my child?**

In the case of a family emergency, absolutely! Should you call to inquire about your child's well-being, the camp office personnel will be happy to pass along information about what the kids are doing. You will also be able to check our website and Facebook page throughout the week for updates. However, with only two phone lines and as many as 200 people in camp, it is impossible to have kids pulled from activities to answer a phone call. It is also as disruptive as a parent's visit to let a camper place a call to home.

### **26. What is the mailing address of the Ranch Camp?**

Campers love getting letters, and staff love seeing the faces of campers receiving notes from loved ones. Mail often and mail early (even BEFORE your child leaves for camp) in order to ensure your child receives the letter while at camp. Mail sent two working days prior to your child's arrival usually results in mail during the first couple days of camp. Please do not send mail that requires signature from US Postal Service. Our mail box is 1.4 miles from camp. Regular US Mail, FedEx and UPS are okay. Address camper mail in the following manner:

#### **Circle V Ranch Camp**

Attn: Camper Johnny Camper, Dates of Camp Session  
2550 Highway154  
Santa Barbara, CA 93105

Your child can send notes home as well. Send stamped and pre-addressed envelopes in your child's luggage for this purpose if you choose.

### **27. Can I FAX a letter to my child?**

YES, The Ranch Camp fax line is 805-693-8452. Please limit your fax to one page without a cover sheet so we don't run out of paper.

### **28. Will my child have a good time at camp?**

The vast majority of children do, but no camp can guarantee that every child will. If you are a parent, you know that sometimes, even the best laid plans don't always work out how you hoped. Six days and five nights can be taxing, even while vacationing. The best we can do is what we do best. You can help by talking with your child and preparing them for the experience. Occasionally we see campers who have just

returned from another camp the previous week. We highly recommend that your child have at least one week at home in between camping excursions.

### **29. How can I get more involved?**

All leaders and counselors at the camp are paid staff. All employees must go through a thorough screening process that includes live-scan, background-check, reference checks and interviews. Due to this process, we do not have any adult volunteer staff at camp. We do need volunteers to assist in our camp office, work/clean-up weekends at the camp, and assisting staff at our bus stop locations.

You also may want to help by making a monetary contribution, please refer to the Friends of Circle V as well as the donor pages on [www.SVDPLA.org](http://www.SVDPLA.org) . In addition, you may keep us in your prayers and spread the word of the good works of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Council of Los Angeles.

### **30. Did we say thank you?**

Those of us at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and Circle V Ranch Camp wish to thank you for entrusting us with your child. Many of us have children of our own and know what it takes to “let them go”, even if only for six days/five nights. We pledge to do our best and hope your child goes home full of memories that they will cherish for their entire life.

### **31. Can we get your feedback?**

You’ve seen those bumper stickers that read, “How am I driving?” Well, we’d like your feedback and opinion about how you feel we are providing services. Although we will always take your calls during business hours, it is truly the most effective for us if you would send us your thoughts in black and white. In this way, we can share what you have to say with as many staff members as possible. With that in mind, we hope you’ll spend a moment of your time and let us know how we’re doing.

#### **You can send us letters or email at:**

Ray Lopez, Director  
Circle V Ranch Camp  
2550 Highway 154  
Santa Barbara, CA 93105

Or

Email: [rlopez@svdpla.org](mailto:rlopez@svdpla.org)