



# ATIS COUNSELOR HANDBOOK

Welcome to The Adirondack Trail Improvement Society!

ATIS is truly unique among all hiking and camping programs. It has operated successfully for many years with little more in the way of physical facilities than a bulletin board, some boats, and a bit of camping gear. Although we have a Headquarters Building with a phone and some nature displays, the program continues to rely on the individual knowledge, enthusiasm, and good judgment of the counselors who actually lead the trips. You have been selected to plan, lead, and follow up trips with participants ranging in age from four to adult. You are an integral part of Monday night's capture the flag sessions, as well as a key ingredient of the monthly picnics.

ATIS sponsors a wide variety of activities, and experience has shown that one briefing at the beginning of the season cannot cover everything. This handbook can in no way replace a counselor's own judgment to solve whatever unusual problem might present itself; but the guidelines presented here should help counselors deal with routine situations in a generally consistent manner.

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**T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S**

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# THE ADIRONDACK TRAIL IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY: BACKGROUND INFORMATION



The ATIS was founded in **1897** for the purpose of maintaining the trail system in the vicinity of St. Huberts. Since then, many local guides and summer trail crews have labored on a system of trails that has now grown to over 100 miles in length. In 1933, the ATIS began hiring individuals familiar with the outdoors to conduct hiking trips and organize outdoor activities such as picnics and even tennis tournaments. During the rest of the 1930's, the Johannsen sisters, Peggy and Jo, were the first "Trail Hostesses" as they were then called. Since then, the program has grown to include a staff large enough to conduct High Peaks Camp in June followed by four or five trips each day throughout July and August.

Throughout its history the ATIS has worked very closely with the **Adirondack Mountain Reserve (AMR) (usually better known as the Ausable Club)**, but the two organizations are quite separate. ATIS is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation with membership open to all who share its purposes of trail maintenance and education for safe and responsible use of the mountains. In common with many other publicly supported, non-profit corporations, ATIS is governed by a board of directors and an advisory council who are elected by the membership of the organization. The directors then elect the officers. Since 1987, the board has hired an executive director to organize the summer staff and to oversee day to day operations; but overall policy and the yearly operating budget are still set by the board of directors. A list of the current officers, directors, and advisors is published in each ATIS newsletter.

Because of its long-standing relationship with the AMR, ATIS is permitted to keep boats at the Upper and Lower Lakes and to use other facilities including the Lake Road bus for scheduled trips and activities. (Although it doesn't affect counselors directly, it is worth noting that membership in the ATIS does not entitle non-AMR members to rent boats or ride the bus except during scheduled trips and activities.) **Counselors have traditionally been allowed to ride the bus for free (even when not leading trips) and can bring along a guest or two who should buy a bus ticket.** Given the increasing use of the bus by club members, proper etiquette would dictate that counselors stand aside and let members board first when they are not actually leading a trip.

# THE ATIS COUNSELOR STAFF



Since the hiring of the first "trail hostesses" the ATIS staff has steadily evolved and expanded to be able to conduct the present program. What has remained much the same, however, is the need for all counselors to be able to operate independently and adapt to ever-changing and sometimes unfamiliar situations in conducting the ATIS's diverse range of programs. There is currently a junior program director/naturalist, a head counselor, senior counselors, junior counselors, and counselors in training (CIT). The requirements, responsibilities and skills needed for each appear below unless they are dealt with in greater detail elsewhere.

## Counselors-in-Training:

### Requirements:

- At least 15 years old
- Some hiking and camping experience
- The ability to take responsibility for yourself and others
- A willingness to learn and to take initiative

Specific Skills: (CITs will be given training in any of these skills that they don't already possess, but they must demonstrate mastery of all these skills before being considered for promotion.)

- a) Read and interpret a topographic map
- b) Use a compass to find and follow a bearing
- c) Know the major mountains in the area and be able to use map to identify others
- d) Paddle stern in a canoe, keeping on course even under difficult conditions
- e) Identify common plants and trees
- f) Treat blisters and other minor first-aid problems
- g) Build a fire and cook a meal on it
- h) Set up tents and secure food from bears and other animals

### General Responsibilities:

- a) Take initiative - see what needs to be done and do it!
- b) Be ready with games or other entertainment when needed
- c) Anticipate problems or safety hazards

d) Never forget that you and the other counselors are there at all times to insure the safety of the participants.

In particular, CITs must be willing to assert themselves when necessary to control the group. Often this means being the "bad guy" and either stopping a fun but dangerous activity or requiring a not so fun but necessary activity. This can be especially hard for CITs who find that they are suddenly in a position of authority over last year's "buddies". Nevertheless, the ability to take control when necessary demonstrates the sort of maturity necessary to become a junior counselor.

### **Junior Counselors:**

Requirements:

At least 17-18 years old

Some leadership experience

First-aid training and lifeguard certification are desirable.

Specific Skills: All CIT skills plus:

a) Ability to plan, purchase, and organize camping trip food.

b) Ability to plan the route for a trip

c) Ability to follow a "herd path" and travel off trail

General Responsibilities:

Same as for CITs, but junior counselors will lead some selected trips.

### **Senior Counselors:**

Requirements:

18 years old

Demonstrated successful leadership experience

Possession of current Wilderness First-Aid (or higher level card); and CPR.

Life guard training and higher level first aid training are also encouraged and rewarded with a salary incentive.

Skills:

All CIT and Junior Counselor skills. Additionally, a senior counselor must be able to organize and control both day trips and camping trips from start to finish. Additional desirable skills include: ability to lead climbs of trailless peaks; ability to play a guitar or other musical instrument to accompany sing-a-longs; knowledge of natural history and the ability to incorporate this knowledge into hikes; experience teaching or working with children.

Specific Duties:

a) Supervise CITs, offering instruction and practice where needed.

b) Insure that each trip is written up in the log book

General Responsibilities:

a) A senior counselor is responsible for the overall safety of all participants.

b) Be aware of hiking abilities of participants and use this information to decide who goes on what trip.

### **Head Counselor:**

The head counselor is expected to demonstrate mastery of all of the skills of an excellent senior counselor. In addition, the head counselor is responsible for establishing **good communication and rapport between all counselors**. He or she will serve as a positive role model at all times, showing enthusiasm, energy, and caring responsibility for all program participants. He or she will arrange bi-weekly Monday night meetings to establish trip leaders and update counselors about any program-

related business as needed. He or she will also delegate the organization of picnic activities and capture the flag supervision.

(As general background, ATIS counselors are not required to be licensed New York State guides since trips are open only to members of ATIS. We are not, therefore, a guide service. As a matter of policy, however, ATIS senior counselors must meet the minimum "paper" requirements of being a licensed guide, i.e. be at least 18 years old and possess the Red Cross First-Aid, Water Safety, and CPR cards.)

The counselor staff generally meets periodically throughout the summer to assign the trips each counselor will lead. The general goal is to give each counselor an equal number of "AA". "A", "B", "C", Discovery, Nature Activities, and overnight trips. Keeping the trip assignments equal does require some time at meetings, but experience has shown that the entire staff works best as a team when no one feels unfairly put upon.

## HIGH PEAKS CAMP



Founded in 1965, High Peaks Camp runs for two weeks starting around June 19 and ending around July 3. There are usually 20 campers and eight counselors, plus a cook and an assistant. The camp spends the first three nights at Panorama and Moonrise Camps during which time basic camping and canoeing skills are taught/reviewed. The camp then splits into three groups for a four day/three night canoe trip to various locations. Reuniting after the canoe trip, the camp spends three more nights at the Upper Lake with day hikes as preparation for the four day/three night mountain trip. After the mountain trip, the camp returns for two more nights at the Upper Lake with a day of informal, low-key competition on the last day of camp.

### **Preparation:**

Counselor's responsibilities for High Peaks begin the day before camp with the chore of moving all the food to camp and then setting up each camp to accommodate the numbers of campers to be staying there. This also includes moving the large table, benches, and chairs from Moonrise to Panorama. Any other equipment borrowed from Moonrise (or vice versa) must be written down so

that everything can be returned at the end of camp. If it hasn't been done beforehand, counselors should make sure:

- 1) all **tents have been checked** for complete poles, stakes, and tent fly;
- 2) **two tents go up to camp** for demonstration and practice;
- 3) **first-aid kits are complete** with no expired medications;
- 4) **lantern, fuel, and mantles** get to camp;
- 5) **song books** get to camp;
- 6) **group camping gear** (cooking kit, rope, tarp, stove, water filter, water jugs) is divided up for the canoe trips;
- 7) **make a list of who will go up the lake in which boat the first time** - generally new campers in the war canoe, but let campers know they will get to switch around;
- 8) make up a **duty roster ("Dirty Rooster")** of camp chores.



### Arrival Day

On the day camp starts, counselors should be at the club by 3:30 PM to greet early arrivals, and deal with any final logistical problems. If rain threatens, make sure everyone has their rain gear handy, and also make sure everyone has insect repellent in a pocket so that no one gets too badly bitten while waiting at the upper end of the Lower Lake - or anywhere else for that matter. The equipment list that all campers receive now indicates that Walkman-type devices are not appropriate. The camp bulletin now prohibits the bringing of candy or other "personal" snacks but does suggest that a few dollars might be nice to have for our traditional mid-camp "fix" of junk food in Saranac Lake at the end of the canoe trip. Counselors can remind campers of these points as they arrive, but we don't need to do a "shake down" to look for contraband.

Very few, if any, campers now arrive by bus so by 4:30 PM the group should be able to start for the lake. At the Lower Lake, read the list assigning campers to particular boats and get the group going, but don't let boats take off too far in advance in case there needs to be some last minute adjustment. At the upper end of the Lower Lake, make sure everyone takes their PFD over the Carry and tell campers that the tractor is only to carry duffel bags. After getting everything to the Upper Lake, let the Moonrise group get going first (after making sure you have the key) so they can settle into that camp before coming over for supper. After supper at the campfire, outline the camp program, have a get-acquainted session, review the rules, and then sing a few songs.



### Camp Rules:

- a) **Wear shoes** at all times to protect against cuts.
- b) **Swimming** is only allowed when a senior counselor or counselor with lifeguard training is present.
- c) Those who have not passed the swim test must **wear a PFD** when in a boat.
- d) Get **permission** from a counselor **before going out in a boat**.
- e) **Quiet hours** between 10 PM and 6 AM.



- f) Keep the noise down at all times.
- g) Only counselors should light the gas lamps.
- h) **Proper language** is expected at all times.
- i) Think about **safety** at all times - on the trail, in boats, and even playing frisbee or kick the can. An evacuation for even something as "simple" as a broken ankle is a major ordeal from most of the places High Peaks goes.



**Counselor Responsibilities:**

When High Peaks is "in camp", the counselors have the following responsibilities:

- a) **CITs supervise dish washing and clean up** of the dining room.
- b) Other counselors supervise **bunkhouse sweeping, bathroom cleaning, trash burning** - one counselor for each of these three jobs.
- c) **Maintain control in the bunkhouse** during free time before and after meals. **Initiate games** if necessary and **be aware of any loners** who don't seem to be involved with the group.

**The first two days of High Peaks are devoted to teaching/reviewing basic canoe and camping skills** while also giving campers a chance to see some of the Upper Lake and its surroundings. For the past several years we have split (pretty much randomly) the camp into two groups after giving the swim test the first morning. One group practices canoeing and then goes to the **Stillwater** while the other practices tent set up, campfire building, map and compass skills and then takes a **short hike**. **Don't rush through these activities and instructional sessions as these skills are very important for the rest of the camp.** I have even seen counselors who still need to be reminded how to properly set up and take down a Eureka tent, so make sure that all campers, even third year campers who might try to act as though they know it all, actually get hands on practice. You may find that using older campers to do the actual demonstrations and then assist the others will meet this goal, but don't let them not participate.

Also, the **evening songfests** are an important part of the program although some campers may require a few sessions before they can overcome the idea that group singing is too old-fashioned to be "cool". Since a few non-participants can wreck it for everyone, counselors should distribute themselves in the lean-to to help encourage any reluctant singers.



Counselors should encourage **impromptu skits** by campers - particularly after the canoe trip and the mountain trip. There should also be some **brief instructional program at the beginning of the earlier campfires**. **Topics can include: 1) first-aid, 2) no trace camping (including**

backwoods sanitation), 3) fire building, 4) water purification, 5) use of stoves, and 6) group organization and leadership. Ten to fifteen minutes is long enough for each session unless there are lots of questions. The goal is not to prepare the campers to pass any "final exam" (although the field day can include some of the points presented), but rather to give the campers an overview of proper conduct and hopefully stimulate questions as the program continues.

**Camping Trips:**

The exact details of the canoe and mountain trips vary from year to year, so this handbook will not deal with those specific logistical problems except that the night before a trip or when leaving at the end of camp be sure to take extra canoes to Moonrise the night before with packs then taken to the warden's camp before breakfast. Campers do need a list of items to pack for each camping trip, and counselors must check these items before letting them put them in the pack. Make very sure that all campers are instructed and reminded about proper backwoods sanitation; i.e. use an outhouse if available, if not, bury everything 3-4 inches below the surface. Remind campers that dishes are washed at the campsite in pails and never in the stream or lake - not even rinsing out between courses. Finally, explain that all water must be considered suspect and not drunk unless filtered or otherwise purified.

On the camping trips, campers should participate as fully as possible in camp routines such as cooking, dish washing, gathering wood, and bear bag hanging. While you don't need a formal "dirty rooster", make sure that each camper shares equally in the work and that it doesn't end up that the boys always gather firewood (where fires are legal) while the girls always cook. Ideally, the CITs can take an active supervisory role in camp chores while the senior counselor monitors the situation and tries to structure the work so that there is no major disaster such as an entire dinner falling in the fire.



**"Olympics" and Awards:**

High Peaks has traditionally finished with a field day usually called "the olympics". The camp is divided into five teams of four that should be roughly equal in ability. The contests include fire building, canoeing, blindfolded tent set up, scavenger hunt, orienteering, and map making. Other events can be added or some of the above eliminated if desired.

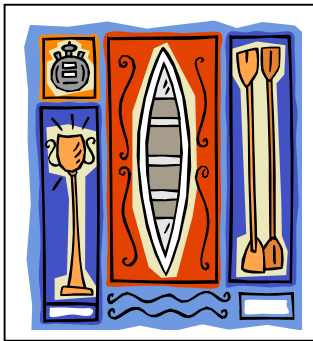


At the final campfire, the counselors present the **High Peaks Award** to the session's overall best camper and the **Old Mountain Phelps Award** to the best first year camper. A former High Peaks Award winner who would otherwise deserve this award again is usually given some other form of recognition so that a new person can be so honored. The criteria for this award are not hard and fast, but generally the camper should have displayed some element of leadership, extra helpfulness, and sharing with others to be considered. The Old Mountain Phelps Award can go to a first year camper

who displays the same attributes, but traditionally it goes to a camper who shows exceptional enthusiasm and love of the mountains even if that camper hasn't yet directed that enthusiasm.

The other awards to campers are limited only by the counselor's collective imaginations. They generally recognize some positive trait or humorous incident during camp, but a camper's minor failings can also be the basis of an award as long as it done "gently".

## JUNIOR PROGRAM



This is the largest and most visible part of the ATIS program. To many of our members and others in the community, this is ATIS. The program consists of scheduled hikes, camping trips, and instructional sessions. The hikes are graded AA, A, B, or C depending on difficulty with some trips also limited as to the ages of the participants. The maximum number of participants for most trips is now 15 - including counselors. For some trips such as slide or "AA" climbs the limit is less. There are also Nature Activities and Discovery Hiking Programs designed for less summit-driven excursions.

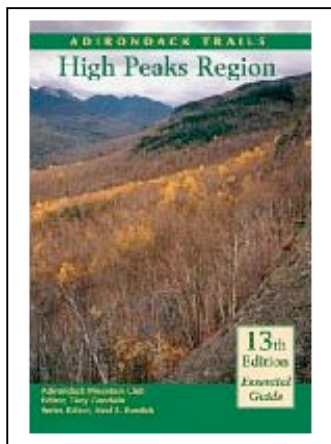
In order to keep groups within these limits, ATIS has used an advance sign up system for both overnight and day trips as explained below. While this system is hardly perfect, it has brought order out of the previous chaos of limiting trip size as the participants showed up at the Club Porch.



The Junior Program also consists of weekly sessions of Capture the Flag on Monday nights and a monthly Picnic at the Lower Lake that is open to the entire community.

### Organizing and Leading Daily Trips

Most of the summer is taken up with the seemingly simple activity of leading daily "A", "B", and "C" trips, but each day brings its own challenges. **Counselors are responsible for sorting out who can go on a particular trip, coordinating transportation, actually leading the trip, bringing everyone back happy and at the appropriate time, and finally writing up the trip in the log book.**



First of all, **make sure you know where you are going.** If you've never done a particular trip (or haven't done it for many years), **study the guidebook and map the night before,** and don't forget to figure out the driving directions to the trail. If you are still unsure, don't be afraid to ask for help; but do not try and figure the trip out while sitting on the porch 15 minutes before the trip is to leave.

For most trips, **counselors should be on the porch a full 15 minutes before the trip is to start** - and this means ON the PORCH, not talking to other counselors in the ATIS Room. The exceptions would be the early "AA" hikes or hikes where there are known to be only a few (i.e. 2 or 3) participants. An early arrival allows you to greet hikers as they arrive, answer questions, decide if there is anyone who shouldn't go, make at least a cursory check of the gear carried, and figure out the transportation.

It is helpful to put one trip leader in charge of "taking attendance" and checking backpacks for water and gear while the other counselor arranges driving with parents, gives directions, and answers questions. If things are under control, a counselor may choose to make small talk or pull out the map to show children and parents where they will be going. **Try to meet hikes in front of the ATIS bulletin board, rather than in front of the Club door.** Also try to keep trips leaving around the same time separate from one another. Make every effort to keep children from misbehaving on the porch.

When the group is assembled, (either at the Club or the trailhead) **make sure that everyone says their name so that the others in the group know who they are hiking with.** You may want to play the name game, by getting everyone into a circle, then letting them say their name and their favorite animal, mountain, ice cream flavor, etc. In general, hikers should not join the trip at the trailhead but must come to the Club porch so that they can help with transportation. Exceptions would be Lake Placid or Saranac Lake residents joining a trip at Adirondak Loj, but only by prior contact with ATIS.

Counselors should make sure, especially on a hot day, that **each hiker has sufficient water.** If not, ATIS has sufficient loaner water bottles to supplement what hikers have brought. Also, try to **check first-time hikers for the necessary gear such as a raincoat and sweater or fleece.** Again, ATIS has some loaner ponchos and sweaters to help out those who didn't bring the right gear or who might have forgotten it that day.

Unless severe weather intervenes, **plan to return close to the time stated on the schedule** because camper's parents will often not be there to pick them up until the stated time. This may require extra stops to look at things of interest or games such as "hunter" on the way back; but these are far preferable to "killing time" at the trail head while waiting for transportation or on the Porch waiting for parents to arrive. ATIS does not have any formal system for "releasing" campers at the end of a trip, but **counselors should make sure that everyone either has a ride or can walk home.** A counselor should remain on the porch until all campers are picked up to



provide supervision and prevent any problems caused by those waiting for a ride.

Who can go on trips? Practically anyone who is physically capable of doing the trip. Some trips such as Alderdice and Upper Lake overnights are limited by age, but otherwise the trips are open to children six and over (younger if accompanied by a parent or responsible baby sitter) and adults alike. Participants should be ATIS members, but the "honor system" has worked well for many years and counselors are not required to check whether participants are current members of ATIS before allowing them on a trip. Guests of ATIS members may participate for a day or so without an additional contribution, but beyond that a per diem contribution or a family membership is expected as noted on the membership form.

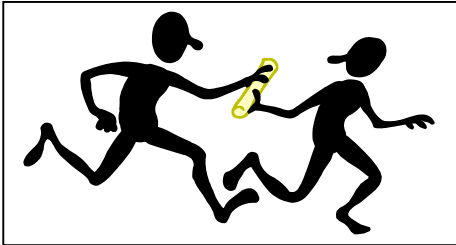
How do you determine that someone can do the trip? This has always been a problem and always will be one, but the present trip rating system plus the starting and finishing times on the schedule seem to have minimized problems as much as can be expected. The "Trip List" sheet with distances, elevation gain, and, where appropriate, comments such as "... harder than average for a 'B' trip" or "... a good trip for someone ready to move up to 'A' trips ...." have also helped potential participants determine for themselves whether the trip is for them.

A group with one person much slower than the rest is usually not much fun for any of the participants, but if someone appears able to do the trip in the time allotted they should be allowed to go. Children tend to have plenty of energy; so if the child really seems to want to go, that is usually sufficient indication that they should be allowed to go unless they have had problems keeping up on trips of the same difficulty in the past. Although the information sheet suggests starting on an easier trip, there is no absolute requirement for a child to "qualify" on an easier trip before being allowed on a harder one. Each leader must ultimately use judgment and common sense with the benefit of the doubt going in favor of the prospective hiker.

**Parents** are permitted on hikes, but we do suggest that adults wait to see if their coming on a potentially full hike might prevent a child from coming. If, however, a parent feels they need to come along for the benefit of a young, first-time hiker, then that desire should be accommodated; and some parents can even be helpful. With parents along on trips, however, it is perfectly appropriate to make it clear that, **"I'm the counselor, and you're the parent."** If the presence of a parent appears to make their child's behavior worse than if the child were not accompanied, discuss that with the head counselor and/or executive director and we will speak to the parent - generally to discourage them from coming on future trips.

**Pacing on hikes:** One of the great challenges for ATIS counselors is to be able to switch from an "A" pace one day to a "C" pace the next day without becoming impatient. Look at the length of time allotted for the trip and plan how long it

should take to reach certain landmarks. If everyone on the trip is capable of going faster so that the trip can spend more time on the summit, fine, but be careful not to inappropriately push a hiker who can just barely "make the pace".



If you do end up with a slow hiker(s), tricks such as **placing them right behind the leader (or even putting them in the lead), and also calling for strategic rests (ideally at a spot of some scenic or natural interest)** will usually keep weaker hikers from becoming totally exhausted. If the above tricks (plus any others you can think of) fail to keep a child

moving fast enough to get trip back on time, then the child should be discouraged from doing any more hikes of that difficulty - at least for a while. It is usually worth making a note of very slow hikers in the log book write up of the trip, but always (both in the write up and in speaking with the child or parents) try to be positive and encouraging as many slow hikers grow to become tomorrow's "tigers".

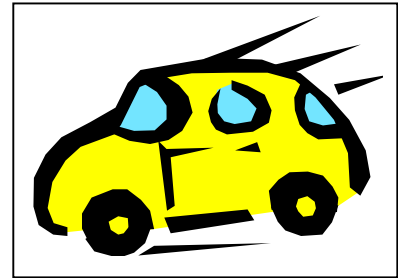
## Transportation:

This is a perennial problem, but experience has shown that volunteer drivers can work - and the alternative of ATIS owning a van or vans would be prohibitively costly. (In response to an offer to donate a van to ATIS, I discovered that insurance alone would be about \$1,000/season for one van. Then there would be maintenance and likely the requirement that all drivers have a special license.) The current system is to **ask all parents to stay until the transportation is taken care of. Since most trips involve both a drop off and a pick up, parents should expect to drive at least every third day their child participates and more likely every other day.**



Generally, **the CIT will take names of participants while the senior counselor in charge of each trip coordinates the transportation.** Counselors should also watch for children who can walk to the porch and thus never have a parent with car present. These parents should be contacted by phone if necessary to get them to do their share. Counselors should also do their best to make sure that all parents share as equally as possible in the driving even if this means sometimes passing up two vans that would take care of the whole group and instead rounding up four smaller cars. In general, each child must have a seat with seat belt although a run to Chapel Pond or Deer Brook can sometimes be made without.

In certain circumstances, **counselors may occasionally use their own cars to transport hikers.** The most common is a "AA" hike with a long drive to the start and an uncertain return time. Another is a camping trip with a remote trail head where a car parked at the trail head adds to the safety in the event of an emergency. Other than the above situations, however, parents are expected to drive. Counselors who do use their own vehicles will be compensated for mileage.



## On the Trail:



Now that you've finally gotten to the trail, a counselor's most important job is to **KEEP THE GROUP TOGETHER.** Overall, ATIS leaders have done an excellent job over the years of obeying this rule, but it never hurts to remind ourselves of its importance. Parents entrust us with their children, and we cannot exercise this leadership if the group is scattered and out of sight. Make sure hikers don't end up drinking all of their water in the first mile or so; and it should go without saying that **all trash is carried back out.**

At the outset of any trip, identify any potential slower hikers and make sure that the pace fits their ability. Sometimes, all that is required (especially with younger children) is to **make the slow hiker the leader.** At other times, put the slow hiker right behind the lead counselor and then adjust the pace accordingly with the goal of never letting that hiker lag by even a few steps. Use the nature guides, guidebook, or your own knowledge to plan rest stops at places of interest other than the perhaps too infrequent ledges with views. This way the slow hiker(s) morale is maintained since they don't feel they're holding the group up. If there is no spontaneous conversation and the rest of the group seems bored by the slower pace, get some **word games** like "botticelli," "pinkedy-winkedy," "stumper," or "hangman" going or **sing** to keep everyone engaged. **Riddles** are also popular favorites.

If all of the above tricks do not succeed in moving someone along fast enough to complete the trip reasonably close to the specified time, then you will have to make a decision. Options include: **a) turning around at a specified time even if short of the objective, b) changing to an easier destination, c) coming back late - assuming transportation will not be kept waiting too long, or d) splitting the group so that the faster hikers can achieve the desired objective.** If there are just two counselors on a trip, option "d" is not possible because then instead of one

well-led group you now have two poorly-led groups (i.e. an insufficient number of leaders in the event of any emergency). If there are other adults along, splitting the group may be a reasonable choice, but keep in mind that there are many possible things that can go wrong. One also must consider that, once you give a hiker an "easy out", more hikers will ask for the same option. In the long run it is probably far better to make slow/lazy hikers stick with the planned objective and keep the group together. If you still decide to split, remember that each group must adhere to its plan exactly so that the group can reunite as planned, and it is preferable to split for the shortest amount of time possible.

It should go without saying that **you never send a camper (or even two campers) back alone**. Neither do you leave them behind along the trail to be picked up on the way back. On herdpath climbs, bushwhacks, or anytime there are any potentially confusing junctions do not allow even a group with adults to go back - losing part of a group this way is at the very least embarrassing or at worst potentially dangerous.

On most trips, however, you shouldn't have to deal with such problems. Then the most important job is to **make sure that everyone has a good time and perhaps even learns something along the way**. We have enough copies of flower, tree, and geology guides so that each trip can carry one or all as an aid to nature study along the trail. Even though you know where you are going, **carry the map and guidebook** and use that to help get campers oriented. Games like "hunter" are also appropriate, but make sure that you are aware of the terrain so that no one ends up running off a cliff or falling into a river in the rush to hide. A trail with many other hikers would also be an inappropriate place to play such games.

### **Additional Rules of Conduct:**

a) **Keep noise levels down.** One of the major reasons given for limiting group size is that noise levels tend to increase exponentially with the size of the group.

b) **Share summits** or other stopping points. Keep the group from spreading out all over the place to eat lunch on a summit. The group doesn't have to be "eyeball to eyeball", but depending on the size of the summit should be organized enough so that there is room left for other groups. Also, keeping the group in one general area will minimize both the need to walk through other groups and the chances for loud shouting.

c) **Ask campers not to walk on the alpine vegetation** on the higher summits.



### **Other Safety Considerations:**

a) **“Walking sticks” should stay on the ground.** After a child realizes that the walking stick doesn't help, the stick will end up being swung around or thrown - the dangers of which should be obvious. Also, if you let one child get a stick, then you'll have to wait while most of the rest of the group gets one.

b) **Rocks should stay on the ground.** In general, with a group the size of most ATIS groups, throwing rocks at a stream is just inviting someone to be accidentally hit with a thrown rock plus one rock hitting another can shatter in very unpredictable ways. On a summit or a cliff, there could always be someone underneath.

c) **Stay away from edges.** Anticipate your arrival at any place where there is a drop off and make sure whomever is first in line is prepared to control the campers from rushing up for a better look. The edges of cliffs are often down-sloping and slippery with needles, leaves, loose gravel, or water. Leave enough of a margin so that even if a second child rushes up and bumps the person ahead there won't be a problem. Finally, don't trust railings - even if they are ATIS railings.

d) **Use care on bridges.** With small children, be prepared to walk them across a high bridge one at a time - especially if they can't reach the railing. Don't let older campers bounce or play on suspension bridges.



## Camping Trips:

During the course of the summer program, ATIS conducts about 12 overnights ranging from the ever-popular 7-10 year old Alderdice overnights to three or four day trips for older campers. For each overnight, counselors are responsible for **organizing the necessary equipment, planning and purchasing the food, and arranging transportation** if necessary. Since many overnights start a considerable distance away, you may want to check the sign up list and arrange the transportation before the day of the trip so that parents are aware of the time required. This is especially true on canoe overnights where one hour is about the minimum driving time.



The general principles mentioned with regards to High Peaks Camp are repeated here for emphasis. Make sure that all campers are instructed and reminded about **proper backwoods sanitation**; i.e. use an outhouse if available, if not, bury everything at least 3-4 inches below the surface (know the six Ds of dumping). Also, remind campers that **dishes are washed at the campsite in pails and never in the stream or lake** - not even rinsing out between courses. Finally, explain that **all water must be considered suspect and not drunk**

**unless filtered or otherwise purified.**

***Food:***

ATIS has an account for groceries at the Valley Grocery. The current charge for camping trips is \$15 per night - a figure that just barely covers our costs. You should therefore **check first for supplies left over from previous camping trips, and do take the time at the end of each trip to store away leftovers in such a manner that they will appear usable to the next counselor.** The trip schedule reminds campers that they are responsible for bringing their own lunch for the first day - except of course for Alderdice overnights. (After that we would prefer to have group lunches so that it is easier to assemble all the food in the bear canisters.

As the trip is organizing, **counselors should ask campers or parents for the trip fee and make sure that any money collected is placed in the cash envelope with a list of those whose payment is enclosed.** Since some parents pre-pay, don't worry about collecting from everyone; and the executive director ultimately has the job of sorting out who has paid. Do be sure to ask for the payment, however, as there have been several cases where campers have carried their money (or a soggy, worthless check) throughout the trip and then back home again simply because no one asked for it.

***Alderdice Overnights:***

These popular events for our youngest campers are a separate category of trip and require a great deal of both **patience and energy** to pull off successfully. With a bit of planning, however, a good counselor can not only give the kids a great time but also have a good time themselves. Furthermore, the positive feedback received over the years indicates that **an Alderdice overnight is often the highlight of a child's summer** and is usually also the beginning of a good ongoing relationship with ATIS.



**Plan the food so that the campers can help as much as possible in its preparation.** Don't forget, however, the ages of these kids and don't set someone up for failure by having them at risk of spilling the whole dinner on the ground. Have **a ready supply of games and activities** for those not engaged in helping cook. (A swim is a possibility although the terrain at Alderdice is not ideal for young swimmers and very close supervision

will be required.) After dinner, a trip to the ice caves or a paddle down to the dam to look for beavers is a good idea to work off some energy before retiring - with ghost stories or whatever. Do make sure that everyone gets to sleep at a reasonable hour or you'll have some tired and uncooperative campers the next day.

Unless lake or weather conditions are truly terrible, **the second day should include a trip up the lake to at least Shanty Brook or better yet across the Upper Lake and up Cy Beede's Ledge, Sage's Folly, Stowe Ledges, or on to Panorama Bluff.** Most kids will not "demand" that you do such a trip (in fact most would probably express a preference to "hang out" at the lean-to or swim at the boathouse), but experience has shown that they remember such trips favorably. (Note: A few counselors have tried bushwhacks up Indian Head, but for most children of this age group the terrain is too rough.)

### ***Upper Lake Overnights***

For **older campers (11 to 15 year olds)**, these overnights are easier to run and provide a chance for a **more relaxed and social trip** than the canoe or "peak bagging" overnights. In recent years the demand for such trips seems to be such that one a month is sufficient, but we could run more if we end up with a waiting list. If ATIS has not been invited to a private camp (such as the Neilson's) we can use the lean-to at Panorama (or sometimes Moonrise) - provided no one has reserved the camp as of two or three days before the trip is scheduled. By being flexible, ATIS is charged only for the lean-to rather than the whole camp. This means that you may **use only the lean-to and the outhouse**, which is located just up the trail behind the lean-to.

While you do not need to necessarily climb any peaks, these trips should have some planned program and should not be reduced to just hanging out at the lean-to. While each counselor should have some ideas for activities, this age group is old enough that soliciting ideas before the trip starts or on the bus to the lake will likely produce a good program. Remember that even though the campers have proposed the idea, it will still require some push from a counselor to actually get them going at the time the planned activity is to start.

### **Trip Sign Up Procedure:**

In recent years, ATIS trips have become popular enough that often we had to turn potential participants away at the last minute to keep group sizes reasonable. To try and avoid last-minute disappointments and to end the need to show up very early to claim a spot on a trip, starting with the 1998 season participants may sign up in advance for all trips as outlined below.



1. A counselor will be available in the ATIS Room from **8-10 AM and from 4 to 5 PM Monday through Friday** (with special hours for the days at the start of each month) and may be contacted in person or by phone at **576-9157**.

2. Sign ups will be taken for most day hikes **up to two hiking days in advance starting in the morning two days before the trip** (e.g. on Monday, sign ups will be taken for Tuesday & Wednesday ..... on Thursday, sign ups taken for Friday & Monday....). The exceptions are "AA" hikes and overnights. Sign ups for these trips can be taken at any time during the summer as well as by mail before the ATIS season starts.

3. If a trip becomes full, participants will be placed on a **waiting list** in the order in which they register. The counselor on duty will try to call those who have "moved up" onto the trip, but the final responsibility rests with those on the waiting list to call ATIS. (If, as of the day before, it looks as though a trip will fill up, notify the head counselor or executive director to see if an alternate trip can possibly be run.)

4. **Those who show up on the porch without advance registration will be accommodated if there is room** - just like the old days.

5. Those registered who are forced to cancel at the last minute should call the ATIS number so that the space can be filled. Last minute cancellations and no-shows are a distinct nuisance to deal with and often unfair to others who wanted to go on the trip. Sign up only for trips you know you want to do.

### **Special Mail Pre-Registration for "AA" Trips and Overnights**

1. To make sure that everyone has received the trip schedule and had time to respond, all pre-registrations postmarked up to June 8 will be treated equally with a "draw" used if a trip has been filled up. Postcards will be mailed the week of June 14 informing you of your status. (If it's really crucial to know of your status earlier, call as of June 11.)

2. Reservations for camping trips should include the appropriate payment.

3. Once the season has started one may sign up for any "AA" or Overnight with a counselor - by phone or in person.

The above is the information about the sign up system which is mailed to all parents along with the trip schedule. **The counselor taking the sign ups records those in the sign up book on a sheet that the counselor leading the trip picks up just before going to the porch.** Try to remember to **get the phone number of those who end up on the waiting list.** Also, **ask about availability of transportation,** and record that as well.

If someone calls to cancel and there is a waiting list, call the first person and give them a reasonable time to respond if you have to leave a message. If no response, call the next person. "Reasonable time" would probably be overnight if the cancellation was received more than a day before the trip, several hours if received the afternoon before the trip, and several minutes the morning of the trip.

## General Camping Equipment and Procedures:

### ***Camping Equipment:***

**Tents:** We now have a good supply of Eureka Timberline tents in two and four-person sizes. While we teach everyone at High Peaks Camp how to set these up, remember that not everyone who goes on camping trips later in the season has been so instructed. The main point to emphasize in setting up and taking down these tents is **the ridge pole cannot be assembled or taken apart when all four poles are anchored at the corners of the tent.** Trying to do so only bends the poles (as is evidenced in some of our tents) requiring dubious attempts at straightening. Remind campers of this important procedure while also, of course, checking carefully at the end that all poles and stakes are accounted for. Also remember to **hang any wet tents up to dry before storing them away.**



**Stoves:** Each senior counselor is now assigned an MSR Dragonfly stove for the summer, and it is their responsibility to keep it functioning. Campers who show an interest can be instructed in their use, but stove operation is generally best left to counselors.

**Water Filters:** These have been a perennial problem ever since it was determined that Adirondack waters might be contaminated with Giardia. Although the current "Hiker" model filters have solved many problems, it is still important to start with the clearest water possible. In most cases this means using a cooking pot to scoop out water, letting it settle for a minute or so, and then pumping. With all filters, **slow, steady, patient pumping is preferable.** Filtering water is a good job for campers to do, but obviously it requires supervision or you'll end up with a clogged, non-functioning pump. As with stoves, **each senior counselor is assigned a pump for the season.**

## Boats

Our goal is to teach everyone to paddle competently in the bow with more experienced campers learning to paddle stern as well. We also want to teach the safe handling (get in one at a time, etc.) of all boats and canoes with special emphasis on the care of wooden boats including the war canoe. Aluminum canoes are so indestructible that it is easy to become careless in handling them. Instruct campers not to drop them, sit in them while on land, drag them over rocks or sand, and especially not to "bridge" them (bow or stern up on shore with the center suspended). Bridging a wooden boat may do major structural damage while any bridged boat is extremely unstable.

**War Canoe:** This is our most unique and also our most fragile boat. Load at a dock if possible. When loading/unloading at Alderdice allow the bow to rest ever so gently on the shore. With the boat still fully floating have the campers remove shoes if necessary and wade to shore. **Do not ever run the war canoe up on the beach** at the boathouse. When putting the war canoe away, make sure it is properly tethered to the posts - we don't want it to blow into the lake again!



With novice paddlers, **take time for some paddling instruction first.** Have the campers sit or kneel on the dock and paddle from there. When everyone has mastered the basic stroke, put them closer together and practice paddling in unison. Only when they have mastered that should you try the canoe itself.



Remember also that **everyone in the war canoe, including counselors, must wear a life preserver (a.k.a. PFD).** We have enough vest-type PFDs for everyone in the war canoe, but make sure to save these for those who will be in that boat. The rationale for this rule is that should the war canoe ever tip over it would be very difficult to match up 14 flailing bodies with 14 loose PFDs (many of which would probably be under the boat). Furthermore, unlike other boats, the capsized war canoe will not provide flotation for all 14 passengers which means that most would have to either swim to shore or tread water while waiting for another boat to pick them up.

**Canoes:** Whole books have been written on the subject of canoeing, but our goals are simply to teach campers **how to safely launch, load, and paddle a canoe on flat water.** The basic strokes to be taught are **bow stroke, stern or "J" stroke, with the draw to be used only for maneuvering near docks** or perhaps helping round tight turns on a stream. We generally do not want to teach tricks such as crawling through another's legs to change places as experience has shown that this only encourages frequent changes of paddlers with risk of upset each time.

As with the war canoe, **the basic strokes can be taught while sitting on the dock before actually getting into the canoe as "coaching" is much easier in this situation.** The goal with stern paddlers is to teach the ability to both keep a canoe straight and to make necessary turns without either the bow or stern paddler having to change sides. In a cross wind the stern

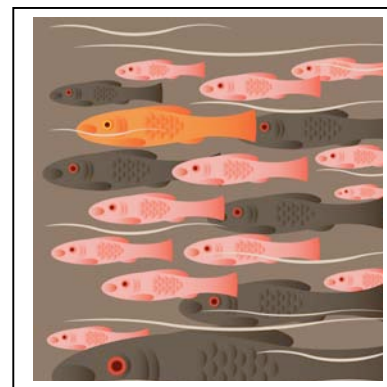


paddler may find it easier to paddle on the downwind side which also means **learning to paddle equally well on both sides.**

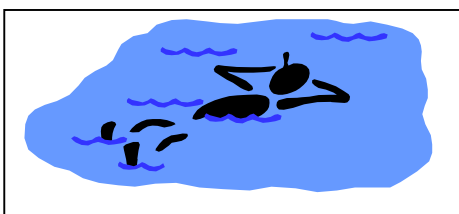
Attention must be paid to the "**trim**" when loading a canoe since a canoe that is severely bow or stern heavy will be very difficult to handle - especially in a wind. Given that we often have a range of ages and weights on trips, achieving good trim in each canoe can be a problem, but it is a problem worth solving.

## Swimming

ATIS has never had any problems with swimming accidents, but only through eternal vigilance can we keep it that way. Swimming remains our most potentially dangerous activity, and just because someone has passed the swim test does not mean that they can't get into trouble. (For instance, I once watched a girl who had passed the test the previous week on a calm day nearly sink beneath the waves the next week on a windy day as she tried to return from the raft.) **When swimming is in progress, someone should be in a boat at or near the raft with extra PFDs and ready to respond while**



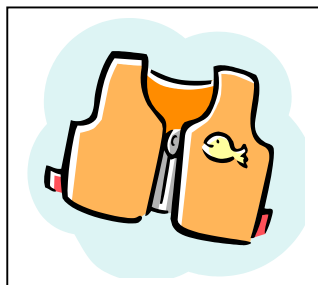
**someone else is on shore to supervise those not yet able to swim well enough to go to the raft.** The "shepherd's crook" should be out on the dock. Additional counselors, if available, should be on shore and on the raft in that priority. (ATIS PFDs may in a few instances be used for swimming but experience has shown that they can only tolerate a finite number of days of swimming before becoming water-logged.)



While swimming is an activity in which the campers need little or no direction, this is not a time to talk or otherwise become distracted from the mission of watching every swimmer at all times. **If there are more than five or six campers swimming, pair them up with a "buddy"** and instruct them to know where their buddy is at all times.

When swimming at other locations, counselors must check out the area for any hazards, obvious or otherwise, and then make some clear rules that are applicable to that spot. In particular, define areas where it is permissible to dive (by underwater inspection if necessary) and closely enforce the rules. Because of the hazards inherent in letting a group swim at an area other than an approved waterfront, many camps now prohibit or severely restrict where their groups can swim. We haven't had to come to that yet, and I hope we never will; but never forget that only constant vigilance will prevent an accident.

**Swim Test:** The traditional ATIS swim test is designed to insure as much as is possible that everyone is capable of swimming a reasonable distance and of staying afloat long enough for help to arrive. The test thus includes a swim around the floating dock (or a canoe at High Peaks) followed by treading water for five minutes. Before campers can swim from the float or be allowed in a boat without a PFD being worn (you always must have one PFD per person in each boat) they must pass the swim test each year. We keep a record of those who have passed the test each year.



Current New York State regulations require that **every child under 12 wear a PFD at all times**, and perhaps the safest rule would be to extend that to all campers; but not having to wear a PFD is an important symbol of increasing responsibility and maturity in older campers. ATIS has always taught that there is no reason for a canoe to ever tip over, and not wearing a PFD reinforces the idea that canoes always stay upright. (As long as every camper has passed a swim test, and there is a PFD or flotation cushion in each boat, the consequences for that once every five year occurrence will not be fatal. The exception is the war canoe as noted above.)

## Log Book:

After each activity counselors are responsible for **recording the names of the participants plus as few or as many details about the trip as you choose**. This record helps determine who is eligible for hiking awards as well as serving as a vehicle for communication amongst counselors and between the counselors and the director. Furthermore, looking back at the old log books is always interesting, and this year's log will be tomorrow's "history". **Record any problems encountered and the action taken**, if any. This would include any, sprain, significant cut, or major blister repair.

Also **record any hikers who had serious trouble keeping up or who were seriously uncooperative**. In the second case try to be specific (e.g. don't just write "...was obnoxious all day.") and in both cases **be as positive as possible** remembering that this record may well be read in later years. Usually just an allusion to the difficulty will be enough to indicate the nature of the problem and serve as documentation should the problem occur on a subsequent trip. With the number of participant days each season we can't remember every problem, but the log book has on several occasions helped the director determine if a camper could go on a particular trip or refer to a pattern of problems when discussing a camper's participation with a parent. Such problems are rare, however, and the log book will usually record nothing but successful trips that will become tomorrow's fond memories.

## LOWER LAKE ACTIVITIES



This has traditionally been a low-key day for water-related activities at the Lower Lake. These have included paddling, swimming, "kick the can", or a hike to Rainbow Falls for lunch. In past years, hikes to Indian Head and Beaver Meadow Falls have been part of the program, but **Lower Lake Activities should be primarily water oriented** and not just another day of hiking with the possibility of a swim. While we still obviously want to keep these days fun, we also need to provide enough structure to **insure that each camper has a chance to learn to paddle and/or row a guideboat.**

On the next page are some sample schedules for a day of Lower Lake Activities. Weather and temperature may dictate which activities are possible with a cold, windy day perhaps the only time that a longer hike is the preferred activity. New ideas are also welcome, but the goal is to **have a directed activity going on at all times.** Note also that on both suggested schedules **lunch is eaten at some place other than the boathouse.** This is to reduce the impact our group has on the others using the area at that time. At all times when swimming or playing kick the can, etc. keep the group organized and as much as possible away from the docks where boats are being launched. **Personal gear should be stashed at a specific location away from the docks** - both to keep it out of others way and to facilitate checking at the end of the day that no item has been left behind.

### SAMPLE SCHEDULES

Boathouse Schedule	
10:15-10:30	Announce program, review rules, assign campers to activities
10:30-11:30	Paddling/rowing practice (trip to Ice Caves possible)
11:30-12:00	Swim
12:00-1:00	Hike to Rainbow Falls for lunch
1:00-2:45	Kick the can, more paddling practice, or swim
3:00	Bus back to Club

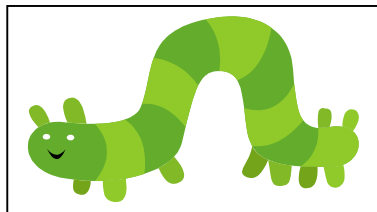
Shanty Brook Schedule

10:15 -10:30	Announce program, review rules, assign campers to activities
10:30-11:00	Paddling/rowing practice (determine who will paddle where for trip up lake)
11:00-12:30	Travel up lake and on to Shanty Brook
12:30-1:30	Lunch/swim at Shanty Brook
1:30-2:45	Return to boathouse
3:00	Bus back to Club

**Travel on the Lower Lake:**

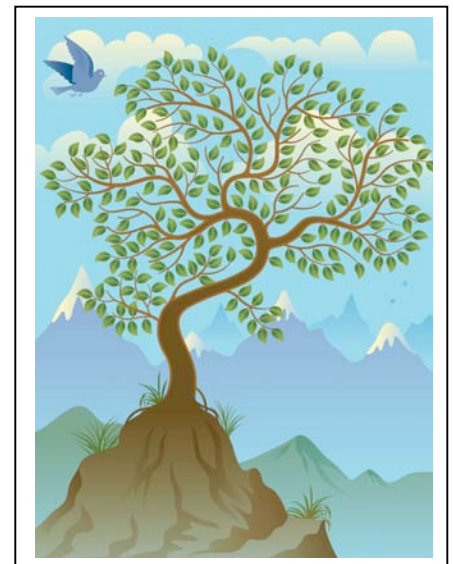
As our "water highway", the Lower Lake can pose some interesting problems - especially when travel up the lake is a prelude to another activity. When it is very windy from either the north or south, **the east (Colvin) side is always the easier place to travel.** The west side may look better at first, but once you round the point the shore offers no protection at all and it's a long mile or so to the channel. In windy conditions, pick the best paddlers, and **keep the group of canoes together** - its just as important on the water as on the trail. If necessary change paddlers (land on shore first) to find the best team.

**NATURE ACTIVITIES**



Nature Activities sessions will continue to be offered in order to explore the natural world along the West River Trail this summer. Two hour sessions will be offered for 4-6 year olds and three hour sessions will continue for 7-10

year olds. These sessions will be led by the naturalist, who will be accompanied by another counselor. There will be a maximum of ten children involved in these activities. Each session will be based on Adirondack nature themes, including insects, geology, animals, wildflowers, birds, rivers, reptiles, etc.

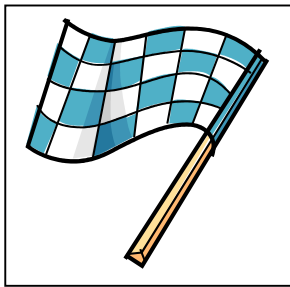


**DISCOVERY  
HIKES**

This summer, ATIS will

again be offering a Discovery Program. These trips will go out once each week. Designed for 4-7 year olds, Discovery hikes will offer an introductory trip that is less focused on reaching a summit and more interested in exploring the trail along the way. We will read stories, play games, sing songs, or create projects during our exploration, rather than just march to the summit. The Discovery Program promises to be a great way to ease children into longer hiking trips!

## Capture the Flag



ATIS supervision includes bringing out the rope circles and the flags. Usually the teams can be divided into light and dark shirts, but do watch for any that fall into the "gray" area as this leads to confusion. Before each evening's games can start, a counselor must announce the basic rules and must make sure everyone is listening - even if they've heard it before. Make sure to describe/demonstrate an acceptable tag (a light touch) as opposed to a dangerous push. Note that anyone observed playing dangerously will be removed from the game. Emphasize fair play, and for at least part of each evening's game two or more counselors should become "playing referees" to reduce the incidence of cheating.

If it has rained heavily or threatens to rain, Capture the Flag should be canceled both for safety reasons with the very slippery grass and the damage that could be done to the golf course when it is wet. If it is canceled, be sure to notify the Club switchboard of your decision. Capture the Flag runs from 7-8:30 PM. Around 8:20, a counselor should announce which will be the last game except that the last two weeks in August should end a bit earlier due to earlier sunsets.



## July and August Picnics



There are picnics in July and August that are open to the entire ATIS community. As counselors, it is your job to attend picnic prep on the day before

each picnic. During these sessions, the counselors create awards, assemble the candy jar, decorate sand castle contest awards, place posters advertising the schedule of events around town, and collect supplies to be used during the following day's festivities.

On the day of the picnic, the counselors gather supplies, decorate the boathouse, set up for the day, organize games and events, present awards, and help clean up after people leave. They should be aware of safety throughout the day, as well as communicate the schedule of events to people who may be attending for the first time. Counselors should also try to wear their ATIS t-shirt to the picnics so that people know they are counselors.

**Please don't hesitate to ask if you have any questions about anything in this handbook! I can be reached by phone at (518) 576-4750 or by e-mail at [megan.mccourt@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:megan.mccourt@mail.mcgill.ca).**