

Though we encourage parents to refrain from sending ANY packages, Friendly Pines asks that you send only one package to your camper(s) per session. We have nothing against packages in theory; in fact, we, like most people, love getting a package. We thought this brief letter might help you understand our "one package" policy as well as enlighten you on the basis for our decision.

**Contraband.** If all anyone ever sent in a package was stationery, some pencils, last week's baseball scores, stickers, or the latest Hunger Games book, life would be easy. Unfortunately, it's never that simple. We've discovered contraband that was hidden in packages with such contrivance that the Office of Homeland Security would have had a tough time unearthing some of it. We've seen stuffed animals that have been unstuffed and then re-stuffed with Good-n-Plenty. We've flipped through magazines to find gum taped to the inner pages. On one occasion, a book, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, had a hole cut out of the center that was refilled with Jolly Ranchers. Packages like these only tell the campers that there is something wrong with a place that expects you to endure more than a couple of days without Starburst or Whoppers. It pits Friendly Pines against parent and child. We feel as though our policy is a sound one, designed with the benefit and safety of the camper in mind.

**Excess:** Before the implementation of our policy, packages too often turned into a showy exercise in excess. Each package had to outdo the last. Before they knew it, families trapped themselves in a cycle of upmanship from which they couldn't gracefully escape. The truth is that the plastic whirly-gigs and do-dads that come in packages do little to enhance the camper's enjoyment of camp. It's the personal gestures that campers treasure most. We've seen boys and girls sitting on their cabin porches or under the shade of a tree reading and re-reading a simple hand-written note from home while the slinky toy that accompanied it had been lost and forgotten on some rock at Toby's Hole. Our advice: make life easy, and keep it simple!

**Exclusion:** In bygone years, because of personal family decisions or as a result of our pleas, most children never received any packages. Others, however, had gotten a package almost daily. This disparity created an unnecessary (and potentially hurtful) distraction from the ultimate goals of camp. Place yourself in that situation, and you can probably see what we mean. Even though we adults know that a Spiderman yo-yo or a mood ring is no measure of a parent's love, it's sometimes hard to explain that to the camper who watches her fellow campers unloading boxes of dime store booty each day at 4:30 PM. We endeavor to make camp a refuge from these kinds of pressures. Camp should be a place where expensive clothes, and jewelry, electronic games, and other material trinkets are irrelevant. Camp offers a world of friendship, activity, entertainment, and discovery. Please let the campers enjoy it all without distraction.

Perhaps all of this makes us sound a little old-fashioned. Truth be told, we are a little old-fashioned, and we feel it's one of our strengths. We kind of like it that way. We think you will too.

To help us achieve our one-package per session policy, we are sending you a green and white Friendly Pines label, attached above. We will only distribute the packages displaying this label. (The label doesn't have to be used as a mailing label; it must simply be affixed somewhere on the package.) As has always been our practice, we will inspect the packages for their appropriateness. (We also inspect letters if their texture, thickness, or odor suggest that the contents are questionable.) Edibles will be confiscated and donated to a local charity. Crude or vulgar items will be disposed of. Other unacceptable items will be kept in our office and distributed on departure day. If you are not sure what constitutes "unacceptable items", please refer to your brochure, Parent Handbook, clothing list, etc. Remember! The enclosed green label doesn't mean you must send a package. Most parents don't and, frankly, we prefer that you don't.

Of course, we will always make exceptions for emergency items. These might include extra meds, a few more pairs of underwear, another rocket for Rocketry, some extra fabric for sewing, or any essential item forgotten while packing. All we ask is that you call us beforehand so that we can be looking for this extra package and distribute it immediately.

**So What Is A Package?** Let's keep it simple. **FIRST:** A package is any mailing that requires more than the current U.S. postage for 2 ounces. **SECOND:** Any package you send must be able to fit inside the enclosed Priority Mailing Envelope. So, before you send a package to camp, stick it inside the envelope. If it fits and you can close the Priority Mailing Envelope's flap, then it's an acceptable size. If your package won't fit in the Priority Mailing Envelope, then it's too big. Please don't send it. All oversized packages will be held until

departure day. The Priority Mailing Envelope was included in the mailing first and foremost as a "tool" to measure package size; however, you are more than welcome to use it to actually mail the package. It's up to you. THIRD: Acceptable-sized packages will require that the attached green and white label be affixed somewhere on the package.

OK. So What Is NOT A Package?. Letters in regular or business size envelopes are not considered packages. You can even send something in a 9 x 12 envelope that weighs 2 ounces or less. This will not be categorized as a package and will not require a label. Sometimes parents overnight a letter. These usually arrive in those cardboard holders and cost significantly more than the postage for a 2 ounce parcel; however, they're still okay, as long as the content is a simple letter.

We hope you understand our rationale for our "one-package policy". As with everything we do, the policy is an effort to keep the value and safety of your camper's stay on the highest level. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. Thank you again for your friendship and your support.