

HOUSEBOAT PREPARATION SCHEDULE

Youth Leaders for years have been asking us for help in planning and executing their trips. The following is just a suggestion; however, those who have followed it have seen growth each year in the number of students they bring to camp. Please read through entire HOUSEBOAT PREPARATION SCHEDULE first before starting it. You will need to calendar and plan accordingly.

SEPTEMBER -Decide on a week and number of houseboats to reserve. Send in reservation confirmation form and fee before September 26, 2014.

OCTOBER -Begin developing yourself through disciplined times with God and the theme / curriculum for your houseboat retreat will emerge! 4 messages, 4 small group times, 4 morning devotional times, 1 3-hour solo devotional time, and 1 great skit for the Sonshine hosted program is usually a winning combo for any houseboat retreat.

NOVEMBER -Receive contract . Sign it and return all 5 pages with deposit by January 15, 2015. Begin scouting for and/or building into your volunteer adult staff for your houseboat trip. Share with them your theme and vision for your trip that emerged from your October times. Get them excited and focused!

DECEMBER -Plan trip budget, transportation (see March), advertising, creative fund raising, and a January parent meeting! In December? Yes, in December! Having your houseboat budget and flyers printed and circulating before Christmas is ESSENTIAL to the success of your trip. I know what you are thinking... "What about the spring break mission trip and winter camp?" Frankly...those should have been planned, announced, and in the "execution phase" MONTHS ago. By announcing and advertising your houseboat camp before Christmas you give parents, grandparents, and family members time to financially plan and more often times than not, gift their child or grandchild a houseboat trip for Christmas! (Seen it only about a 100 times or so!) Calendar a "Parent meeting" for January. Call every parent in your group and let them know why they need to attend this parent meeting. Let them know that ONLY at this meeting will early registration for houseboats be accepted guaranteeing their child a spot on the trip. *If you are a middle school pastor, don't forget to call the 5th grade parents and high school 8th grade parents!

JANUARY -Advertise trip and execute parent meeting. At your parent meeting share with them your theme, message titles, small group ideas, and vision for the trip. Let them know that your role/behavior throughout the trip is to create opportunities for friendship, interaction, love, companionship, membership, and recognition for their child. You want to remove ANXIETY, FEAR, and DOUBT from the parents surrounding you and the trip. After the meeting accept early registration from the parents with a full payment or deposit. Let them know how many spaces are available and the only other time to sign their child up is in March. Pick a day and time in March where sign-ups will open for example... Friday March 1, 2015 at 3:00pm. The first (However many spots are still open from your parent meeting) with full payment or 1/2 payment will get a spot. What this does is create a frenzy! You will have

parents showing up to the church office an hour early to make sure their kid has a spot. Once your boats are filled, start a waiting list. Continue to collect 1/2 or full payment. Once you reach 7 kids call Sonshine ASAP to reserve another houseboat! If you follow this schedule perfectly up to this point, I would be shocked if you are not calling us for another houseboat!

FEBRUARY-Continue to advertise the trip at every possible opportunity. Have a fun fundraiser. However, if money is the goal of your fundraiser you have missed the point! What this does is get kids together in the name of the trip. They invite friends and your pool of participants grows! The underlying theme of any "Fundraiser" or event should be to befriend students, encourage them, model a Christ centered lifestyle, and challenge them to a deeper relationship of intimacy and trust with Jesus.

MARCH -SIGN-UPS!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Let the frenzy begin!!!! We highly recommend the beginning of March so you have time to properly plan transportation for WHEN you grow by another houseboat. A great way to cut cost is by being creative in your transportation. Have parents donate their vehicle and themselves as a driver to and from houseboats. Select 1 parent to be in charge of all your transportation needs. Parents love to be used and can be your greatest volunteers! We have seen parents drive students from other states in order to save money so their kid can go on houseboats. Don't underestimate a parent's love for their child and their desire to have their child grow in relationship with Jesus!

APRIL -Continue to advertise and have sign-ups with 1/2 or full payments! Have another fun -fundraiser, but don't forget to befriend, encourage, model, and challenge! Begin showing slide shows or videos from last year's trip. Have students give testimonies at the weekly meetings from the previous year about how the trip influenced them. If this is your first trip go to www.sonshineministries.com for videos and pictures.

MAY -Continue with sign-ups. Call all the incoming grade's parents and let them know why their child must attend houseboats (January parent meeting material). Call all parents of students who have not signed up yet and find out why. You may think this is a huge waste of time, but many youth leaders have filled a whole boat in one day with this simple exercise.

JUNE -Send in final payment by June 5, 2015. Continue to call parents and students. Never be content or satisfied with how many students you have until the day of your trip. Then trust that those are the ones Jesus has given you to serve. The same goes for July and August. **AFTER YOUR TRIP!** -Have a potluck dinner at the church and invite the whole congregation to view a slide show or video of your trip. Have a time of worship, testimonies from students, and a brief summary message from you, the leader. This will memorialize the trip for your group and spring board you right into September where it all starts again!

Again, we are here to serve you and we realize that Houseboats is your trip! We are just honored to be a part of it!

-Sonshine Ministries