

Camp Photography

My name is Sandii Peiffer and I am part of the Conference Communications Team. My primary responsibilities are design and layout of the Susquehanna LINK, our conference news publication, maintenance of the Conference Facebook page and a couple of Conference communications blog pages, some graphic design, and photography at Conference events.

A little background though ... Once upon a time I was camp lifeguard, counselor, Dean, cook & dish-washer, housekeeper, groundskeeper, program director, office manager, camp staff recruiter and trainer, photographer, deans trainer & camp promoter...

For more than 13 years I have worked on promoting our (and some other) conference camping programs by designing the Camp Brochures, posters, and many supporting promotional pieces.

Each year I have been directed to include photos that show:

- all the camping age groups
- roughly even boys vs. girls
- as much cultural diversity as possible
- the FUN being had at camp!

Digital photography has made the job of choosing camp photos easier and harder at the same time. Whilst (most) photos are ready to use in digital format, the volume of photos to look through is significantly greater! After all digital photography is “free!” You can take as many photos as you want and you don’t have to pay to get them all (or any) developed!

For the 2015 camp books I perused more than 5,000 camp photos - just from 2014 summer events!! Then I looked at more than 15,000 photos from the 5 years prior in the search for images that met the aforementioned criteria for promoting the Camp & Retreat Ministry. That constitutes around 11 hrs of just viewing (assuming only 2 seconds per image), not to mention downloading time, filing/categorizing (into camp folders), and screen loading time to view just the thumbnails (which did not always work.)

In 2016 we received around 4900 photos with 393 making it to the “best of” folder ... that’s about 1 in 12 photos. And although there are 393 “best” photos, we still had to dig deeper into previous years’ “bests” to find enough to fill and meet the criteria for this year’s camp brochures!

It is important for us to use photos that our camp leaders have taken for a variety of reasons:

- They create a sense of ownership and thus connection — kids love to see themselves in our brochures, so do their parents and churches!!
- They accurately portray the fun being had at *our* camp sites
- Most importantly we have permission/authorization to use these photos (ie. model release)

Stock photos are expensive and impersonal — I can count the stock photos I have used on one hand, and most of them weren't photos of people (but cookies & patchworking)

Here are some guidelines and observations (in no particular order) for you to consider as you take camp photos at future events. If you are not the photographer, then please share these with whomever you give that responsibility to.

- Nominate a camp photographer & if available a backup. Someone who loves to take photos, and has access to a decent camera (not a cell phone!) You may have a camper (hint: look for an introvert) who loves to take photos (closely monitored!)
- Please, capture **smiling** faces!! Some kids love the camera and some don't. Some kids can smile a genuine, eye-squinting smile on demand, many can't. This category is for the kids who love the camera!!
- Group shots are more valuable than individual shots, so ask a small group of kids to bunch together and say "stinky socks!!" or "fuzzy bellybutton!!" Small groups of 3-6 kids (with or without a leader) make great pictures for our promotions.
- Be aware of ALL the faces/people/objects in the frame (can you say "photo bomb"?!)
- For the kids that are more camera shy, use a zoom lens (optical, not digital) to take candid (non-posed) photos of them **engaged** in/focused on a craft, study, or activity, or in their leader.
- Observe culturally-diverse groups of friends/small groups and take photos of them. Try not to single out the minority/diverse (Hispanic, African American, Asian) kids as they may feel embarrassed, or they may pose unnaturally or exaggerated
- If you are a leader of an intergenerational or adult event – we need LOTS of photos in these categories!

- Please do not take photos at meal times! The photos with food on the table and/or people eating are not appealing, and rarely meet publishing criteria. If there is a fun-loving group at the table pre-food then snap away!!
- Turn the date stamp OFF! Do check the time & date settings on your camera though ... If we need the date, it is saved in the photo data.
- Camp photos will not to be used to promote certain photographers. I have received camp photos from volunteers with the contingency that they are to be credited if used. Whilst we have given credit occasionally in the past it will no longer continue. Photos taken at our camps are only approved for Camp & Retreat use and promotion
- Please, do not take wide shots of hordes of campers playing on a field ... unless it's Soccer! Get in close, or use a zoom lens, to capture smaller groups or individuals throwing, catching, getting tangled, creamed, muddy, soaked ...
- Set your camera for high resolution; 3-5 MB or higher. For print, we need images at least 2000px wide, preferably not from a cell phone, unless crystal clear
- Clear, in-focus images. Please clean your camera lense/s!
- Know your camera: Do you have to push the button half way down to focus/compose before capturing the photo? Is there lag-time when you push the shutter release to when it clicks/captures? (Hold the camera still!) Shutter speed for action shots no less than 1/100th of a second (and higher). "Calm" shots not less than 1/60th of a second shutter speed, unless you have a very steady hand. Anticipate the action or expression in action photos and time your shutter release accordingly
- Instead of sending all of your photos to the Camping office at the end of camp, please take the time (let someone else look at your photos too) to choose the best photos to send
- Set up a Google Docs folder (not Google Pics album) for your full-resolution, best camp pictures and invite camp staff and campers to add their best pictures to it. It will be easy to send your camp photos to the Camping Office too!
- **Please label your CD, Thumb Drive or email/folder with the camp name/site/ID (like GH4, or CP2) and date.**

- The best way to send bulk photos (more than 10, full resolution) to the Camping Office is:
 - Email: ahorton@susumc.org
 - Mail: Anne Horton, PO Box 2053, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050-2053
 - Thumb Drive
 - CD
 - Google Drive: invite/share ahorton@susumc.org, speiffer@susumc.org
 - DropBox: speiffer@susumc.org
 - Hightail: ahorton@susumc.org, speiffer@susumc.org
- The Conference email has a limit of around 10MB, and your own email/internet speed may have limits, so less than 10 photos can be sent in lots of 3-5 images per message, depending on file size.

Any questions or comments?

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