



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# ADVENTURE GUIDES HANDBOOK

New Canaan YMCA  
“Friends Forever”

## NEW CANAAN YMCA ADVENTURE GUIDE PROGRAM

### PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Consistent with the New Canaan YMCA mission, I hereby pledge to provide positive support, care and encouragement for the children and families in the Adventure Guide Program by agreeing to the following code of conduct:

I understand the mission of the New Canaan YMCA, *Enriching all people in spirit, mind and body...The New Canaan YMCA is committed to providing programs and services that promote the health and well being of our members and our community. We are founded on Christian principles and are guided by our core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.*

I will model and teach the YMCA core values—caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

I will ensure to follow the YMCAs commitment to strengthening communities through: Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility

I will help ensure a safe and healthy environment for my child and other members' children.

I will provide support for the Volunteer Program Leadership, and YMCA Staff working with the program to provide a positive and enjoyable experience for all.

I will demonstrate positive role modeling through behavior, actions, and activities.

I will follow the structure of the program as set forth by Y-USA and the New Canaan YMCA.

I will support an alcohol and drug free environment for my child and agree to abstain from such substances at all New Canaan YMCA sponsored activities and events.

I will agree to and abide by a zero tolerance policy of improper personal conduct.

I will encourage my child to treat other participants with respect regardless of race, sex, creed, or ability.

I will help provide proper supervision for all children.

If I see other people engaging in activities that do not adhere to this code of conduct I will address it to the best of my ability.

I have read and understand this code of conduct. I am fully aware that failure to support this code of conduct and the YMCA's zero tolerance policy may result in **expulsion** from the New Canaan YMCA Adventure Guide program.

**Penalties may be imposed upon an entire Community and are at the sole discretion of the YMCA.**

\*Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\*Individuals who do not sign and agree to abide by the Parent Code of Conduct will not be permitted to register for the Adventure Guide program.

## Introduction: Program Purposes and Philosophy

### Our Mission

Enriching all people in **spirit, mind, and body**... The New Canaan YMCA is committed to providing programs and services that promote the health and well-being of our members and our community. We are founded on Christian principles and are guided by our core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

### Our YMCA promise:

At our Y, strengthening community is our cause. Every day, we work side by side with our members, volunteers, and other organizations to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

### What We Do:

Our Y makes accessible the support and opportunities that empower people and communities to grow. With a focus on **youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility**, our Y nurtures the potential of every youth and teen, improves our community's health and well-being, and provides opportunities to give back and support our neighbors.

### Youth Development

We are committed to nurturing the potential of every child and teen. We believe all kids deserve the opportunity to discover who they are and what they can achieve. Each year, nearly 6,000 kids come to our Y to have some fun. While they're here, they are also developing character-building values, discovering new skills, and forming relationships within our community.

Explorers learn the fundamentals of public speaking and leadership. While also creating bonds with peers who are also in this program.

### Healthy Living

Our goal is to improve the community's health and well-being. Our Y brings families closer together, encourages good health, and fosters connections through fitness, sports, fun and shared interests. We offer programs for everyone to promote fun, fitness and family unity.

In this program Explorers develop alongside their Leaders. Learning that the key to a healthy family is patience and selflessness. All while spending time in the great outdoors.

### Social Responsibility

We believe in giving back and providing support to our neighbors. Since 1954, we have been listening and responding to the needs of our community through education, training, motivation or support. Whether it's building a healthier community at home, or reaching across borders through our World Service Initiative, we are there to help others become healthier, more confident, connected and secure.

Leaders and Explores learn the responsibility they have towards keeping the world and their community healthy.



## The Program History

### History

Around a simple campfire, two men engaged in deep conversation, reflecting carefully on the events of history and the effect on the integrity of the family and quality of life. It was 1926, a time of great fascination with the culture and way of life of American Indians. Joe Friday, an Ojibwa Indian, told his friend Harold Keltner, a YMCA director in St. Louis, about the spiritual relationship of father and son in his culture. Friday described the father's active role in the rites of passage for the young son as both became friends forever. Keltner was exhilarated by the discussion and felt he had received a wonderful gift.

Inspired by his friendship with Joe Friday, Harold Keltner created a new YMCA program and started a remarkable tradition. The father-son program spread quickly across the nation in 1950s and became known as the Indian Guide program. As years passed, the program evolved. Today, Adventure Guides captures the intent and magic of the original program— a deepening bond between a parent and a child.

### Today

Among the oldest family programs in the Y, parent-child programs have lasted and grown over the years because they offer families a unique opportunity. Parent and child spend time together, having fun and sharing experiences that lead to a better understanding of each other and a closer relationship. They do this within a supportive group of other parent/child participants called a Community. Together, parents guide their children through a wide array of experiences aimed at helping children reach their full potential. And parents grow, too. The leadership skills they acquire and the friends they make create lasting memories. Through Adventure Guides, you and your child will grow closer and develop memories to last a lifetime, reaming "Friends Forever"

(retrieved from ymca.net)



## Program Structure

### Community

Your Community is the group you are part of. These can be as big as 20 families, and are run by the Navigator. Communities should meet regularly, aside from the three outings. Communities that meet throughout the year get the most of the program.

### Community Placement

When joining the program participants can either select to join a community or are randomly placed in a community. If the community you wish to join has reached its capacity of 20 families, the program director can place you in another community with people you know, or a new community can be created (with the discretion of the program director). Community placement is first-come, first-served.

### Expeditions

The Communities are broken up into two Expeditions: Girls Expedition and Boys Expedition.

### Explorer

The children participants are known as Explorers. They are young and still need to find their way through life!

### Leader

The adult participant is the Leader. They are the ones who help guide

their Explorers through the program and life.

### Navigator

The Navigator is the leader of each Community, and is elected by the current Navigator, or the participants in their Community. The Navigator oversees the planning of various events (activities and community service) throughout the year, and communicates information from the New Canaan Y regarding outings and various other offerings. Examples of events can be a meeting about an upcoming outing, a gathering at a sports event, or coming together for a community service project!

### Compass Bearer

The Compass Bearer is the Leader who oversees their Expedition ceremony. They also help plan the larger community service events during the school year.

### Path Finder

The Path Finder is the main Leader in charge of guiding their assigned Expeditions and helping the program director communicate important information to the Navigator. They also help plan our parent/child events (such as a dance, and/or active event).

## Outings

### Outings

There are three outings per year that are organized by the New Canaan YMCA. For the Fall and Winter each Expedition go on their own Outing (Girls Expedition Weekend and Girls Expedition Weekend). The Spring Outing is for all; Boys and Girls Expeditions combined into one weekend. Activities during these outings are run by staff from the camps. Cabin lodging is provided at the Winter and Spring outing, but the Fall outing is a camp out! Food is provided at all outings; however, the Fall outing dinner is a cook out with your Community. Your Community may decide to cook out at other events as well. Your Navigator will email about specifics before the start of every outing so make sure to check your emails! Every outing has a ceremony lead by the Navigators, Path Finder, and Compass Bearer. Per the New Canaan YMCA Adventure Guide Code of Conduct, all outings are substance free.

### Ceremony

Held the last night of every outing, the ceremony provides context and meaning to our program. Adults and children are told of the history of the program and renew their promises with the stating of the “aims” and “pledge” (found in the next few pages). Use these as moment of reflection and discussion with your children.



## Patches and Gear

### Patches

Everyone receives a patch for joining the program. There is also opportunity to earn patches throughout the program that commemorate one's first year, attendance at an outing, and completion of grade related awards. Our grade related awards follow two main themes: 1) The celebration of nature 2) Enriching family and community. Most of our awards take the form of our state tree, the White Oak. As little Explorers progress in the program their trees grow. A Compass patch will also be awarded celebrating one's commitment to community service. Further, a Bald Eagle will also be used to celebrate participants in their final year who have shown extraordinary dedication to the program. More information on how to earn patches is provided throughout the handbook.

### Vest

You need some place to put all of these patches and a vest is the place! The style of the vest is very much a Community preference so be sure to check with your Navigator to make sure you get the right vest. If you have questions, please reach out to your program director for suggestions on where to purchase vests.

Program Participant Patch:



## Ceremony Practices

### The Aims

To be clean in body and pure in Heart.

To be "friends always" with my parent/child.

To love the sacred circle of my family.

To be attentive while others speak.

To love my neighbor as myself.

To respect the traditions and beliefs of all people.

To seek and preserve the beauty of forest, field and stream.

### The Pledge

"We, Leader and Explorer, pledge ourselves to observe all the aims of the Adventure Guide Program and to foster companionship of father and child while respecting the great beauty of nature"

## Ceremony Practices

### Closing Ceramony

AND NOW.....



MAY OUR GREAT CREATOR OF NATURE.....



(raised arm)

BE.....



(Waggle hand)

WITH YOU.....



FOR TODAY.....



(Arms stretched wide, head back)

AND FOREVERMORE..... ( Shooting an arrow in the sky)

## Outings and Other Y Events

Throughout the year the New Canaan Y runs several outings and events available only to Adventure Guide participants. We strongly encourage everyone in the program to participate in these events. They do require advance registration and payment. More information can be found in the Y's latest brochure, on the Y's website, or by contacting the Assistant Youth and Camp Y-Ki Director at [gbennett@newcanaanymca.org](mailto:gbennett@newcanaanymca.org) or 203-920-1634.

### Outings:

#### **Fall Outing: YMCA Camp Mohawk (September/October )**

Held in late September/Early October, this event is a traditional camp out where Communities pitch tents and cook their Saturday night meals around a camp fire. This is also our new member induction ceremony. Separate weekend for Boy and Girl Expeditions.

#### **Winter Outing: YMCA Camp Beckett-Chimney Corners (January)**

Held in January, at a YMCA Camp in Mass. Communities enjoy a weekend snow shoeing, tubing, playing on a frozen lake, and many more fun activities! We also will have an option to go skiing at a local mountain! Separate weekend for Boy and Girl Expeditions.

#### **Spring Outing– TBD (April)**

Our last outing of the year is held in late April with both the Boys and Girls Expeditions.

### Other Events:

#### **Fundays**

Join us for a special Adventure Guide event at the Y! Participants will have exclusive access to several areas in the Y. Each space will have a Y attendant running fun and unique activities!

#### **Volunteer Days**

Held in the winter and spring. These are Expedition wide service events and are planned by your program director and the Expeditions Compass Bearer.

#### **Leader-Explorer Events**

Open to current and past participants (until 8th grade). These are special non-outing events planned by your program director and the Expeditions Path Finder.

## **Community Meetings**

### **Why We Recommend Them**

We find that communities who meet regularly during the school year tend to be the most populated communities. Meetings do not have to be big formal events but we suggest that you make a schedule and try and stick to it.

### **Where We Recommend Holding Them**

Keep them in safe, entertaining places, and somewhere that is easy to get to for everyone. It could be out at a local establishment, at someone's house, or at the Y! If you would like to do it at the Y we ask that you reach out to George Bennett at the Y to coordinate a time that works.

### **How Often We Recommend Holding Them**

We know that everyone is busy and involved in various programs but try and have an event monthly!

### **Navigator Meetings**

A Navigator meeting will be held once a season at the Y to go over some housekeeping, outings, concerns, and various other things. It is crucial that you attend.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Some helpful tips throughout the year!

### September

- National Day of Service and Remembrance: September 11

### October

- Make A Difference Day: 4th Saturday of October

### November

- Veterans Day: November 11, 2019
- Family Volunteer Day: 3rd Saturday of November

### December

- International Volunteer Day : December 5, 2019

### January

- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: January 20, 2020

### February

- Random Acts of Kindness Day: February 17, 2020

### April

- National Volunteer Week: (usually the 3rd week in April)
- Global Youth Service Day: April 17-19, 2020
- Earth Day: April 22, 2020

# Kindergarten Participant Awards

## Adventure Guide Kindergarten Participant Awards

### Outing/First Year Patches

Participants attending an outing will receive an outing patch commemorating the event which is then attached to your Community vest. Additionally everyone receives an Adventure Guide patch during the first year in the program.

### Kindergarten Specific Awards: Oak Tree Acorns

The mighty White Oak Tree, our state tree, started out it's journey in life as a small acorn. Much like how you start out this journey in the program, as the years go on, watch how you and your Leader grow together. Acorn patches are given at a rate of one per month and can be completed in any particular order. The first three Acorns are given to Leaders and Explorers concurrently. These Acorns require memory work for the Explorers and can only be completed with some coaching from the Leaders. The others are awarded just to the Explorers. Each Acorn is attached to the Kindergarten Award Patch on your vest.



## Kindergarten Requirements

**Acorn one:** Know and repeat before the Community all the names of each Leader and Explorer in your Community

**Acorn two:** Repeat all six parts of the Adventure Guides Aims before the tribe

**Acorn three:** Recite the Pledge of the Adventure Guides program

**Acorn four:** Plan, purchase, and cook a meal for your family along with your Leader. Then after dinner do the dishes with your Leader. A statement in writing must be given to the Navigator confirming this.

**Acorn five:** Complete a two mile walking hike with your Leader. This can be done at an outing. A report must then be made by the Explorer at the next meeting describing anything of interest.

**Acorn six:** Complete three craft projects with your Leader. These can be completed over a period of time at various community meetings.

## Kindergarten Requirements Sign-off Sheet

Explorers Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Community Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I have completed the following awards on the following dates and have presented this to my Navigator who has given their approval.

**Acorn one:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Navigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Acorn four:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Navigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Acorn two:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Navigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Acorn five:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Navigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Acorn three:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Navigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Acorn six:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Navigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# 1st Grade Participant Awards

## Adventure Guide 1st Grade Participants Awards

This years award are split into three areas of focus **Physical, Brainy, or Craft**. Three key areas that our children grow as they progress through this program. Our White Oak Acorns now begin to grow into Saplings. These Sapling patches can be earned by fulfilling one of the tasks listed in the next few pages. Out of the eight Saplings that can be earned, at least two must be earned from each area. Which means that no more than four Saplings can earned in a particular area. Saplings should be attached to the 1st Grade Award Patch. All tasks must be reported back to the community.



## Physical

- Leaders and Explorers swim at least 50 feet, tread water or float for three minutes
- Have a physical fitness program daily for 30 days with the Leader and Explorer working up to at least 25 sit-ups, 12 pushups, running in place for three minutes
- Plant a garden containing at least 3 plants
- Rig a fishing line hook, float, sinker, and catch at least one fish
- Go horse back riding with your Leader
- Participate in a team sport and have your Leader coach, keep score, or coach at practices and/or games
- Go on a fishing trip with your Leader (#4 cannot be completed in same trip)
- Go on a three mile hike with your Leader
- Plan, prepare, and clean up a meal for the family with the help of Leader
- Go on a family bike ride, being sure to follow safety rules
- While participating on a organized sports team demonstrate good sportsmanship
- Participate in a walk-a-thon or a road race
- Take lessons with your Leader for a new hobby (golf, guitar, skating etc.)
- Go bowling with your Leader

## Brainy

- Learn and describe 5 animals that live in the Long Island Sound and draw or find a picture of each
- Learn and describe 5 wild animals that live in our area and draw or find a picture of each
- Identify 5 trees native to Connecticut and make a leaf and bark display of the trees
- Name the order of the plants in order from closest to farthest from the sun
- Using a compass, show the direction of north, south, east, and west
- With your Leader help, research and write a short paper (50-75 words) on the history of your Community name. A drawing can also accompany this paper
- Using safety rules, Explorers must build a fire using only materials found in the forest. Matches can be used to start the fire. Then cook a small meal for your Leader
- Spend half the work day with your Leader, learning what they do at work
- Prepare a display of 5 or more different rocks
- Learn and recite the YMCA promise and list the three areas of focus
- Develop a plan if an emergency happens at your house
- Visit your local fire department or police station
- With your Leader plan a family technology free night
- Learn to tie five knots and present them to the Community
- Bake something from scratch with your Leader

## **Craft**

- Make a birdhouse and report what birds are using it
- Make a bird feeder and report what birds are using it over a week
- Make a homemade kite and fly it
- Make a weather station containing weather vane, thermometer, and rain gauge. Make observations over a two week period
- Do a sand painting design, bead design, or leather design
- Build a model from a kit or original materials
- Make a photo display from photos taken from the Adventure Guide Program
- Make a holiday decoration

## 1st Grade Requirements Sign-off Sheet

Explorers name: \_\_\_\_\_

Community Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I have completed the following awards on the following dates and have presented this to my Navigator who has given their approval.

Sapling one:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Navigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# 2nd Grade Participant Awards

## **Adventure Guide 2nd Grade Participant Awards**

This years awards are a continuation of last years awards, with eight new Saplings to earn! Giving Leader and Explorer more time to explore new things. Out of the eight Saplings that can be earned, at least two must be earned from each area. In order to encourage exploration, children can only get awards for two things that they previously got awards for. But we still strongly encourage you to keep up the traditions you gained last year!

## Physical

- Leader and Explorer swim at least 50 feet, tread water or float for three minutes
- Have a physical fitness program daily for 30 days with Leader and Explorer working up to at least 25 sit-ups, 12 pushups, running in place for three minutes
- Plant a garden containing at least 3 plants
- Rig a fishing line hook, float, sinker, and catch at least one fish
- Go horse back riding with your Leader
- Participate in a team sport and have Leader coach, keep score, or coach at practices and/or games
- Go on a fishing trip with your Leader (#4 cannot be completed in same trip)
- Go on a three mile hike with your Leader
- Plan, prepare, and clean up a meal for the family with the help of your Leader
- Go on a family bike ride, being sure to follow safety rules
- While participating on a organized sports team demonstrate good sportsmanship
- Participate in a walk-a-thon or a road race
- Take lessons with your Leader for a new hobby (golf, guitar, skating etc.)
- Go bowling with your Leader

## Brainy

- Learn and describe 5 animals that live in the Long Island Sound and draw or find a picture of each.
- Learn and describe 5 wild animals that live in our area and draw or find a picture of each.
- Identify 5 trees native to Connecticut and make a leaf and bark display of the trees
- Name the order of the plants in order from closest to farthest from the sun
- Using a compass, show the direction of north, south, east, and west
- With your Leader help, research and write a short paper (50-75 words) on the history of your Community name. A drawing can also accompany this paper.
- Using safety rules, Explorers must build a fire using only materials found in the forest. Matches can be used to start the fire. Then cook a small meal of one meat and vegetable for Leader and Explorer
- Spend half the work day with your Leader, learning what they do at work.
- Prepare a display of 5 or more different rocks
- Learn and recite the YMCA promise and list the three areas of focus
- Develop a plan if an emergency happens at your house
- Visit your local fire department or police station
- With your Leader plant a family technology free night
- Learn to tie five knots and present them to the community
- Bake something from scratch with your Leader

**Craft**

- Make a birdhouse and report what birds are using it
- Make a bird feeder and report what birds are using it over a week
- Make a homemade kite and fly it
- Make a weather station containing weather vane, thermometer, and rain gauge. Make observations over a two week period
- Do a sand painting design, bead design, or leather design
- Build a model from a kit or original materials
- Make a photo display from photos taken at Adventure Guides
- Make a holiday decoration

## 2nd Grade Requirements Sign-off Sheet

Explorers name: \_\_\_\_\_

Community Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I have completed the following awards on the following dates and have presented this to my Navigator who has given their approval.

Sapling one:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Navigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# 3rd Grade Participant Awards

## Adventure Guide 3rd Grade Participant Awards

Awards for the 3rd graders year focus on community service. By completing a community service project that has been approved by the program director participants will receive a Compass Patch. This Compass shall act as a reminder to keep you pointing in the direction to always serve your Community.

Community service awards can be earned for participation in any of the service projects suggested below or anything else you choose to do! All projects must be approved by the YMCA program director.



### Suggested Community Service Activities

- Volunteer with the New Canaan YMCA's Togetherhood: The Togetherhood Committee is a member-led volunteer group with the Y, and has helped hundreds of people in a variety of ways– from hosting service events, to sending packages to our troops and caring for the homeless. Togetherhood is sharing the Y's mission of social responsibility and having a lasting impact on our community.
- Assist in our efforts with FAFU: Facing the Future, a child development center serving the Kenyan slum of Kibera (please refer to the New Canaan YMCA website, and session brochure for more information).

**3rd Grade Requirements Sign-off Sheet**

**Explorers Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Community Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I have completed the following awards on the following dates and have presented this to my Navigator who has given their approval.**

**Compass Award:** \_\_\_\_\_

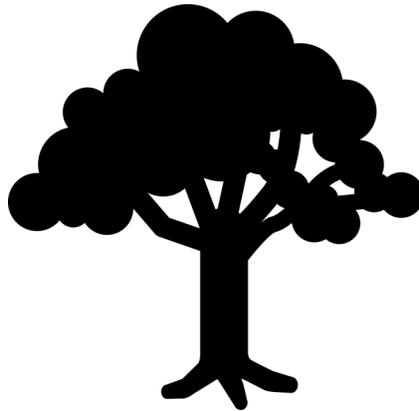
**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Navigator Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

# 4th Grade Participant Awards

## Adventure Guide 4th Grade Awards

This years awards focus on commemorating your years in a program unlike no other. You and your Leader have the option to choose one of the three projects on the next page. These are meant to instill reflection on your years spent learning to respect one and other. Learning to sacrifice selfishness and impatience. As you have grown so have your **White Oaks** and for this final patch you will earn a **White Oak Tree**. If you decide to do more than one project you can earn multiple Patches.



An extra award will also be given this year to any child who has completed all their Acorns, Tree's, Compass, and White Oak during the years in the program (must be at least two years). This patch will be a **Bald Eagle**, the official bird and symbol of America. A high flying eagle that can live for many years, it is seen as symbol of luck. The **Bald Eagle** recipients will be acknowledged during the closing ceremony of the spring outing.



## 4th Grade Projects

Projects fall into one of three categories **Physical**, **Brainy**, or **Craft**

### Physical:

- Come up with a two month training routine with your Leader for a 5k and then complete a local 5k with your Leader. Remember that is not about your time but about your experience .

### Brainy:

- Do a research project on the history of your Community name. Focus on five big events and how they relate to modern life in New Canaan. This could be done on poster board, Powerpoint, or another Navigator approved format.

### Craft:

- Complete a scrap book detailing all the fun adventures you've participated in. With photos, mementos, or written memories detailing each year. Then write a short paper (500-1000 words) about what you have learned and will miss most about the Adventure Guides.

**4th Grade Requirements Sign-off Sheet**

Explorers Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Community Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I have completed the following awards on the following dates and have presented this to my Navigator who has given their approval.

**White Oak Tree Project One:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Navigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**White Oak Tree Project Two:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Navigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**White Oak Tree Project Three:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Navigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Bald Eagle Project:**

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Navigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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