

Making eXtreme Counselors (MXC)

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PURPOSE

Making Extreme Counselors (MXC) brings older youth (ages 14 to 18) who plan to serve as camp counselors together from across the state of Ohio to spread the joy of camping. This two-day, one-night event brings innovative ideas, camp counseling best practices, and new perspectives to Ohio's teens. Youth leave with skills that will enable them to act as leaders in the planning, teaching, as well as actual camp counseling for their own county 4-H camps. The workshop is useful for all potential counselors—novice through masters. MXC stands out as a unique counselor training experience due to the nature of the schedule, sessions, and presenters. This design allows youth to individually dictate their learning experience while guaranteeing the expansion of their peer and professional connections, as well as their knowledge base.

SCHEDULE

The MXC schedule is designed to allow each participant the opportunity to map out their own agenda for the weekend:

- Attend 6 sessions total
- Sessions are concentrated around the development of specific research-based competencies that have been identified as essential in the ideal camp counselor
- Every session offers 8-10 class options; each class expands on the session topic in a different way
- Classes are intentionally interactive, dynamic, and give the youth a chance to develop and practice the topic skill.

Flag Ceremony



CORE COMPETENCIES

Specific skills have been identified by Dr. Hannah Epley, Ohio State University Extension's Specialist for Camping and Older Youth, in her dissertation research on *Defining and Describing Ohio 4-H Camp Counselor Core Competencies* (2014). These skills and competencies are being used to help determine session concentrations.

The following competencies are being featured this year throughout the MXC's sessions:

- Communication
- Program planning
- Teaching and facilitating
- Teamwork and leadership
- Thinking and problem solving

Forming Bonds



SESSIONS & SPEAKERS

The sessions are taught by some of Ohio 4-H's top extension professionals and camp directors. The combined experience of the team of 15 instructors includes decades of camping experience. They have participated in national camping conferences, published camping aids, and train over 800 teens to become excellent camp counselors annually.

To supplement our own professionals' teaching, MXC strives to bring in top camping specialists as keynote presenters, including recreation and team building giants such as: Jim Cain, John Fark, Joe Richards, J.J. Pitman, Tim Borton, City of Oregon Parks and Recreation Director/ Recreation Consultant and MXC 2016 presents Neva Baltzell, Florida State Residential Camping Coordinator.

OUTCOMES

MXC provides an environment:

- For Ohio 4-H Educators from across the state to empower teens to develop work force preparation skills.
- For Ohio 4-H Camp Counselors to share information, network, compare, and receive new ideas for camp programming and activities, strategies for working with campers, and counselor roles with each other beyond county boundaries.
- To advance local county counselors from concept exposure to skill mastery by providing opportunities for practice, problem solving, and leading throughout the workshop.
- To identify new themes, traditions, classes, and concepts for camp counselors to discover through formal and informal discussions.
- To raise awareness about risk management strategies from other camping programs.
- Reignite the energy in a county level camping program.

SELF-REPORTED SKILLS IMPROVED

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| • Leadership | • Trust |
| • Communication | • Consideration |
| • Responsibility | • Cooperation |
| • Confidence | • Ability to adapt |
| • Initiative | • Listening |
| • People skills | • Planning |
| • Life skills | • Customer service |
| • Team work | • First impressions |
| • Problem solving | • Social skills |
| • Public speaking | • Accountability |
| • Patience | • Respect of others |

Making Memories with Cross-County Members



112 Keep Calm & Camp On Champions



NUMBERS TALK

In 2014, there were counselors from 31 counties, representing eight of Ohio 4-H's 13 camps. 29% were first-year counselors and 71% had one or more years counseling experience.

Post-event surveys reported:

- 97% of youth believe the training they received would help them get a job.
- 99% of youth believe that the training would make them be a better camp counselor.

Noteworthy Camp Counselor Take-aways:

- Stop a task when it is still fun for the campers
- Go beyond what is expected
- Ways to calm campers and keep them engaged
- How to get and keep everyone involved
- Remain confident and communicate



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