

# Youth Camps

## The Situation:

For years, the famous Texas hill country youth camp, Laity Lodge Youth Camp, has been swamped with applications for its summer camps. Trying to make it fair for all applicants, the camp set a date for beginning to accept applications and found itself besieged on that day. Parents would travel hundreds of miles just to be at their doorstep when they opened on that day and FedEx would deliver thousands of applications, marked for delivery on the starting day. Of course, with a "first-come-first-served" rule, the camp staff would spend the next month or so sorting out the applications, trying to figure out a fair way to put them in order...top of the box, bottom of the box, dump 'em out and see who's on top...While no one ever doubted the staff's integrity, parents were understandably upset when little Johnny or Suzie didn't make the cut.

## The Solution:

To be completely honest, it took us two tries to get it right. The first attempt, for 2002, mirrored the old way: applications would only be accepted on-line beginning at noon (CST) on a certain day. On that day, at noon, thousands of parents logged in and began filling out the application and, the moment it was completed, submit it. Well, it worked pretty well. At the end of the day all the slots and waiting lists were filled...at the expense of the parents' nerves. It was like the Oklahoma land rush, parents whose computers had crashed, parents who had not picked the right camps, parents who had several kids to register all felt disadvantaged and picked up the phone...You get the idea. Other than that, registration worked great, the new system saved months of wading through stacks of handwritten applications, determining who got what and manually entering the names and addresses into the camp computer.

But, there had to be a better way. There was. The camp sent out letters giving each family their own personal registration number. Then we put up the 2003 application weeks in advance so parents could take their time and make sure everything was correct before registration day. When they logged in with the number, everything was already pre-filled, all they had to do was check to see if everything was still correct. Then, at noon on the day, all parents had to do was watch the countdown clock and click the Register Now button. Seventy percent of the kids were successfully registered within the first 60 seconds! Ninety percent had registered within the first hour and all camp assignments and waiting lists had been impartially filled. And, best of all, only two phone calls out of thousands of registrations.

Once we got everyone registered last year, we added a new, protected access site for the camps. Prior to camp starting, camper families were sent a personal login ID which took them into their personalized portal for viewing the latest camp photos; sending messages to their campers and purchasing "Care Packages" from the camp store for their camper. In addition, the parents' portals allowed the camp administrator to post schedules, alerts, messages and news specific to each camp or cabin so parents with children in that camp or cabin are notified when they log in.

The parent-to-camper messaging service and camp store sales were so well received by the parents that additional services for parents and alumni, and an expanded camp store are already in the works for 2003.

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*For our site, nuMedia developed a "Parent Portal" for the parents of kids attending our summer Laity Lodge Youth Camp where parents could send care packages or emails to their campers, or take a look at photos of their campers, and read daily messages from the camp director. They developed an on-line registration system for us which was very user friendly and provided staff with extensive data and administration capabilities. In addition, it saved staff time.*

*When you love the people coming to your website and want the best possible user experience for them, count on nuMedia to help you make it possible."*

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## Features:

Camper database is kept clean and up-to-date

Parents are not rushed when submitting applications

Camp assignments and Wait Lists are impartially and automatically completed in real-time

Parents can easily communicate with their children

Parents can easily send needed, or just for-fun, packages to their children

Parents can easily see what is happening at the camp and what their camper is doing.

Alerts and News keep Parents informed and reduces worry

Camp increased revenues

Happy Parents. Happy Campers. Happy Camp Staff

System can be custom designed for any camp, integrated with its existing website. The services can hosted in our data center or on the camp's servers.

<http://LLYC.org>

