SHARE YOUR LOVE OF THE OUTDOORS

AN INTRODUCTION TO SPRING & FALL EMPLOYMENT
Outdoor Environmental Education, Conferences & Retreats
YMCA CAMP ORKILA
WHO WE ARE

Our program and philosophy is centered on the development of the whole person – in Spirit, Mind, and Body. Our staff are the primary motivating force in encouraging people, especially children, to further assume responsibility for positive and sustainable lifestyle choices. Therefore, we are interested in hiring people who model such a lifestyle.

Working at a resident camp is truly one of the most difficult, yet rewarding, opportunities you are likely to experience. Our task of accomplishing the program goals is not an easy one. Creative, compassionate, self-motivated individuals can best achieve these goals.
YMCA of Greater Seattle
EQUITY STATEMENT

The Y actively promotes a culture free from bias and injustice. We are dedicated to removing institutional and systemic barriers that result in oppression and racism. We will be accountable to marginalized communities for creating equitable and sustainable environments where social justice is woven into every facet of our programs, and by caring for our communities in a culturally versatile and respectful manner.
PROGRAMATIC GOALS

- Nurture a sense of appreciation for the natural world
- Pique participant’s curiosity – about themselves, their community, and the world!
- Emphasize how humans can interact positively within natural systems
- Build problem-solving skills, trust, self-reliance, and self-esteem
- Foster strong connections between participants that can be carried back to their classroom or community
- Create opportunities for folks to positively challenge themselves and take healthy risks
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A Northwest Tradition

YMCA Camp Orkila began as a summer camp for a handful of inner city Seattle boys in 1906. Owned and operated by the YMCA of Greater Seattle, Orkila now serves thousands of children, adults, and families each year. Its programs still include summer camp, as well as Teen Leadership Programs, Family Camps, Y Guides, Conferences & Retreats, Community Programs and the Outdoor Environmental Education program.

The Orkila OEE program began serving just a few schools as a site for environmental education programs in 1971. In 1984, the YMCA developed its own environmental education program for schools. Since then, the OEE program has grown and continued to develop. This year, it will host approximately 7,000 students from 70 different schools within the Pacific Northwest.

The “YMCA Way”

The YMCA was originally founded in 1844 as the Young Men’s Christian Association. However, today the YMCA of Greater Seattle works to include all people. The one aspect that still holds true is that we are an association of people who strive to help others develop to their fullest potential in spirit, mind, and body. As part of this mission, we try to incorporate four core values into our program and the way we work together: respect, responsibility, caring, and honesty.

In order to achieve our mission of empowering all people, especially the young to reach their fullest potential, the Y must become an anti-racist organization which is why, on October 1, 2020, our organization took a pledge to formalize the commitment to educating ourselves, having hard conversations, reducing barriers, supporting staff, and unleashing potential for all.

We’re beginning these next steps by owning and acknowledging the truths of our past so we may all heal from the harm we have caused. We use this knowledge to inform the anti-racist and equitable future of the Y.

Located in the San Juan Archipelago

Living on an island is a wonderful way of life! Orkila is settled on the Northwest corner of Orcas Island in the San Juan Islands, which means that we enjoy views of the Canadian Gulf Islands and spectacular sunsets every night. To get to the island, one must take an hour-long ferry ride from Anacortes to Orcas Ferry Landing.

Camp Orkila recognizes that we occupy land that was first inhabited and stewarded by the Lhaq ‘temish (LOCK-tuh-mish) or Lummi people. We acknowledge that the colonization resulting in the removal of indigenous peoples from this land is rooted in white supremacy.

Camp Orkila strives for accountability; in examining our current practices, the Y recognizes some of our cabin names are indigenous names and words used without written authorization. We apologize for this unauthorized use.

The YMCA of Greater Seattle leadership team looks forward to working with the tribal community and other community leaders to define a path forward. We will address this unauthorized use in a way that honors and respects the tribal peoples connected to this land, their culture, and our shared history and future in a sustainable way. We are committed to restorative practices and fostering strong and stable relationships with our tribal communities and neighbors.

We honor and value the stewardship and connection to the land that the Lhaq ‘temish continue to have. This inspires us to continue our learning journey to better protect and care for the spaces we inhabit.
Facilities & Staff Housing

YMCA Camp Orkila consists of 285 acres of forests, field, farm, pond, and marine environments, as well as a 110-acre private island and 10-acre mountain retreat within Moran State Park. Orkila’s facilities include an 18,000-gallon marine tank, forest trails, pond community study center, organic garden, salmon hatchery, high and low ropes courses, 1000-foot zip line, climbing tower, soccer fields, archery range, basketball and volleyball courts, crafts center, campfire circles, covered program shelter, and a half mile of beach-front property. Staff live together in four of our Dederer Retreat Center buildings. Each building, nestled in the forest slightly away from main camp, has four bedrooms, two bathrooms, a complete kitchen, and a comfortable living room.

Healthy Food Service

Our staff and guests eat family style in the Larry Norman Lodge overlooking President Channel. With an emphasis on health and variety, our kitchen staff creates nutritious meals serving:

- Fresh fruit at least once a day
- Milk and milk alternatives
- Full salad bar with every lunch and dinner
- Local produce
- Poultry, fish, vegetarian and vegan entrees
- Gluten- and soy-free friendly alternatives
- Breakfast bar, including healthy hot and cold cereals, fruit, and a full hot breakfast.

Staff will also be able to request food from a set menu from the kitchen to use when cooking for themselves in their houses on their time off.
LIFE AS SPRING & FALL STAFF

This is a brief and certainly not all-encompassing job description for working here at YMCA Camp Orkila with the Outdoor Environmental Education (OEE) and Conferences & Retreats (C&R) programs. This description is an honest attempt to let you know the realities of one of the most rewarding (and challenging!) jobs you will ever have.

YMCA Camp Orkila is a not-for-profit organization which provides environmental education, conference and family programs, and a summer camp experience. While working here you will be working with all types of groups – which can take a lot of your energy. The love, excitement, and value of what we are doing here makes it all worthwhile.

We will work each season on a rotating schedule in two or three different groups. On average, you will work 5 days and have 2 days off. You can expect to work a combination of weekdays (teaching environmental education) and weekends (working with conferences and retreats programs).

Our Alcohol and Drug-Free Workplace Policy exists to ensure that we, as cause driven leaders, are always providing a safe and nurturing environment for youth development and are modeling healthy living and positive behaviors.

While working here you must have the ability to work long hours. We work some days from 7:30am to 9:00pm. This can be both emotionally and physically draining. Our days are long and we DO realize that we ask a lot from you.

One of the key requirements to working here is that you must have a love for kids. If you’re annoyed with chatty kids in a restaurant, kids playing at a park when you are trying to read, or the students in your classroom when you were student teaching, then this job is not for you. Kids and education are the reason that we are all here!

You must have a sense of humor about being here too!
Environmental Education (weekdays): Typical Schedule

The following is a typical day’s schedule while teaching environmental education here at Camp Orkila. Please know that this schedule is subject to change at a moment’s notice—flexibility is a key characteristic of our successful staff. This schedule will give you a brief look at what is expected of you and what the kids are involved in while they are here.

7:00AM – Camp starts “waking up”! Students wake up and prepare for the day! Meanwhile, staff begin to prepare for their day, looking over schedules and getting ready for classes.

7:45AM – Students assigned to KP (Kitchen Patrol) plus two Orkila staff members meet in the Larry Norman Lodge to set tables and make sure everything is ready for breakfast.

8:00AM – Time for breakfast! All staff are expected to attend breakfast. We eat together as a staff and the kids sit together with their own table groups. This is a chance for us to start the day as a community, answer any questions for schools, each other, and students and get the day off to a great start. At each meal, when we clean up, assigned staff support in the dish room, monitor dish collection carts, and post by the kitchen doors to help with the flow of traffic.

9:15–10:45AM – Your first class of the day begins. You may be teaching pond, beach walk, geodesic dome, initiatives or one of the other 30 classes that we offer. We train staff on all of these classes during staff training. Each class is an hour and a half long. Preparation for the class should be done prior to teaching time. All the resources that you will need for the classes, including lesson plans, activities and supplies, are located in our environmental education program office.

10:45–12:15PM – Class number two. Most of the time you will have the same study group the entire time a school is here. This way you can establish a connection with the group and learn the most effective way to work with those students. Usually parents and teachers tag along with your group to help with behavior and to observe the awesome things you are doing with the students.

12:15PM – Staff and students assigned to KP meet in the lodge to help set the tables for lunch.

12:30PM – Lunch! With each meal there is always a vegetarian option. You also have the option of bringing your own food to the meal if you choose, however there are not facilities in the lodge for you to do personal cooking. We do have a refrigerator to store any extra things that you want to bring to a meal.

1:45–3:15PM – Class number three begins. Camp is located on 285 acres which means that many of the activities are spread out. This is great because you have your own space to teach and be as creative as you want but it also means that you have to be a great positive motivator in moving your group from place to place or you will spend the whole day walking. The key to this is to be as creative as possible–make everything a game!

3:15–4:45PM – The final class of the day. Students can be worn out at this point. Make sure classes are a great mix of teaching and action so that the focus is on the class and not the two hundred sticks on the ground.

4:45PM – Classes are done for the day. Now it is time to transition to Open Recreation or simply, open rec. For students—this is like the BIGGEST and best recess EVER. For you, some days you be assigned to an open rec duty and others, you won’t!

5:00-6:00PM – Many activities are offered during open rec—boating, art, archery, and more!
6:00PM - KP’s and two staff meet in the lodge to set up for dinner.

6:15PM - Dinner time! If you are not doing an evening activity then you can choose not to come to dinner... as long as you don’t have a job at the meal.

7:30-8:45PM - Evening program! You might be doing a science fair, facilitating a Harry Potter Adventure, running a dance, a camp fire, or a night hike. Many times we have three or four schools here at a time. Each of these schools do a different evening program so we often have lots going on in the evenings. Typically (but not always) you work two evenings a week and have the other nights off. You get to choose which evenings you work and what activities you lead- so if campfire is your thing, then go nuts!

8:45PM - Return all supplies from the evening program and make sure all costumes that may have been necessary are returned. Look over your schedule for tomorrow, gather any books or lesson plans you may need to read over for the next day and head home up the hill.

Part of the day may also includes:

- Behavior management especially in regards to safety.
- Doing occasional office work and light maintenance.
- Cleaning: This primarily happens on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays when groups leave. Though we have the guests contribute to cleaning their living space, we need to do some deeper cleaning once they depart camp. This involves cleaning cabins, bathrooms, facilities and the lodge. Often staff split up into cleaning teams, grab some great music, and attack a particular part of camp! Camp is a beautiful place and we love to keep it that way!
- Each Friday afternoon, we all sit down as a group and review the week, give each other “hoorays” and generally feel good about the work we have just done. We look to what is coming ahead for the next week, receive schedules and sign up for duties for the next week.

After hours and weekends are the bulk of the time we have to prepare for classes and evening programs. But not to fret, we are all in this together; by sharing resources, ideas, knowledge and experiences, we can enjoy learning as much as the kids we work with during the week. Come prepared to share your knowledge and turn interests into amazing stuff to use with the kids during the week!

Our program is only as good as we make it, and we can only make it good by an absolute commitment to each other on the staff. We need the help, knowledge and support that each one of you can provide. From this commitment, we hope to cultivate a working environment in which all of our staff learn new professional skills, develop long-lasting friendships, and have the opportunity to share their knowledge with each other. If this job sounds like it’s a perfect match for you then please submit a resume- we look forward to hearing from you!
Outdoor Environmental Education Class Offerings

LIFE: Life science classes study the interactions within the living world.

EARTH: Earth science classes study abiotic factors that impact the living world.

CHALLENGE: Challenge classes address human interactions, communication, team-building and adventure.

- LIFE
  - Plankton
  - Super Salmon
  - Marine Invertebrates
  - Life in the Forest
  - Beach Walk
  - Pond
  - Garden
  - Sustainable Living
  - Marine Investigation
  - Outdoor Living Skills

- EARTH
  - Forest Investigation
  - Rope Bridge
  - Geodesic Dome

- CHALLENGE
  - Mountain Lake Hike
  - Mt. Constitution Hike
  - Initiatives
  - Initiatives II
  - Climbing Wall
  - New Games
  - Sea Kayaking
  - High Ropes
Conferences and Retreats (weekends): Typical Schedule

Our weekend program serves families as well as conference and retreat groups. Working with this program is different than doing environmental education, however this program is equally as rewarding because of the opportunity to work with families as they learn and have fun together.

As a staff member, some of your work days will fall on a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. Here is an outline of our weekend program and what your schedule might look like on those days:

On Fridays, whatever staff is working that day will meet with the Conference and Retreat Director to discuss the upcoming weekend. At this point you will all review the schedule for the weekend and discuss any details that may be important. Usually on Fridays someone drives our luggage truck and mini buses (you will be trained) to the ferry landing to pickup the luggage and weekend guests. The rest of you make sure cabins are set; the lodge is ready and guests are checked in.

Saturday 7:45am: One staff member along with the Conference & Retreat director will set up the lodge and make sure its good to go!

8:00am: Breakfast begins and guests start arriving at the lodge. The guests on the weekends eat buffet style. Staff take turns helping to run the meal to make sure that everyone gets a chance to eat. Expect at least one meal duty during the weekend.

9:00am: Staff gather for a program assembly to introduce themselves to guests and share where they will be during the morning.

9:30am: Program areas begin! There is archery, riflery, arts and crafts, row-boating, Life in the Forest (a large group tag game), the Giant Swing, and the Marine Center. Families come to the various activities, participate, and then venture onto the next activity. Often families are very interested in staff and what you do and where you are from– this is a chance for you to make some really neat connections with the guests.

12:00pm: Lunch! Staff sit at their own tables but still help out with meal duties.

1:30pm: Program areas begin again. You will be working in a different program area from the morning.

3:30pm: Rotate to another program area! We don’t want you working the same thing all day so you will mosey to your next location to facilitate something new.

6:00pm: Dinner!

Evenings: If you are working, you’ll either help manage a campfire the group is hosting or you and a coworker will put on a show for the guests. Work the evening is usually done by 8:30pm.

Sunday 7:30am: Breakfast- during this meal guests (and you) make sack lunches for the afternoon as lunch is not served on Sunday.

9:00am: Program Areas open. Less things are run on Sunday since most guest have left and others leave on the 12:20am ferry.

11:00am: Once the guests leave, all the staff who are on that day are responsible for cleaning camp (much like the cleaning discussed earlier for Friday’s once a school leaves). Once the cleaning is done on Sundays, you will work on projects to get ready for the following week. Then enjoy the rest of your afternoon!

Our weekend program is an extremely successful program here at Camp Orkila. Families come to enjoy the beauty of this place, the activities we provide and the positive and fun atmosphere we create. Each of you, as staff, are important to making this program something families look forward to each year.
**Pay and Benefits**
Starting pay is $85/day. The many benefits for seasonal staff at Orkila are listed below:
- Opportunities to use our Orkila sea kayaks (after proper training).
- PTO accrual,
- Multi-week in-depth training of challenge course and science curriculum.
- Access to plant and harvest in our large organic garden.
- Optional discounted WFR training [Spring only]
- Caring, fun, adventurous, and experienced co-workers!

**Spring & Fall Dates**
We start hiring for the spring season in mid-October of the previous year. Our fall staff is usually comprised of returning staff from the previous spring and summer. The following are typical dates for our two seasons:

**Spring:** Late-February - June  
**Fall:** Late-August to late-October

**THANK YOU!**

**Contact Information**
Thank you for taking the time to learn about spring and fall employment at Camp Orkila. Are you interested in learning more? Do you feel like you would be a good fit for our program? Please send your resume and cover letter to:

Dylan Gonda, Outdoor Environmental Education Site Director  
dgonda@seattlemca.org

Katie O’Rourke, Conferences and Retreats Director  
korourke@seattlemca.org
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