

CALLING MA'S AND PA'S FOR FAMILY GROUPS

The assignment/calling of Ma's and Pa's for the family groups should be considered very carefully by the Priesthood leader(s), as directed by the Spirit. These very important leaders will help set the tone of spirituality and family cohesiveness that will be so important in making the trek a successful experience. Couples should be called who are respected by the youth, have a deep sense of spirituality, have adequate stamina to fully participate in the trek, and who can schedule appropriate time for participation. There may be some other couples/ singles who, for whatever reason, don't meet all these criteria (e.g. stamina) but who can provide excellent service as fireside speakers, story tellers, or other support personnel.

MA'S AND PA'S GUIDELINES

1. Each couple will be responsible for supervising on the trail and in camp six to eight (or whatever number is finally decided, considering the numbers of youth and the numbers of Ma's and Pa's) youths ranging in age from 14 through 18 assigned to your 'family' from wards throughout the stake. You may not know the youth in your 'family' and they may not know each other. One of the youth in each family will be a youth leader--ideally a young man or young woman serving on the Youth Conference or Trek Committee.
2. All adult leaders must be there for the whole conference and walk approximately ____ miles the first day, ____ miles the second day (and ____ the third day, etc.). Each family will pull a handcart the entire way.
3. All will be camping in fairly primitive circumstances. Ma's will stay with the girls; Pa's will stay with the boys.
4. All participants are encouraged to wear pioneer style clothing throughout the conference.

Each Ma and Pa is expected to:

- a. **Help the Youth Leader** - Support the youth leader as he/she leads the family in activities and challenges such as get acquainted games, devotionals, meal preparation, following conference rules, keeping the family together, problem solving, pioneer games, etc.
- b. **Keep things positive** - Encourage appropriate behavior by setting a good example and maintaining a positive and supportive approach before and during the trek (absolutely no whining!!). If you have concerns, speak directly to one of the trek leaders. Your family should be working together. If you find yourself and your youth leader running around gathering equipment, loading carts, doing dishes, etc., something has gone wrong! Help all members of your family to be responsible.
- c. **Maintain hydration** - Keep yourself hydrated and make sure everyone in your family is carrying their water bottle and drinking at least as much as you are.

d. Enhance the spiritual experience - Prepare well and seek the Spirit in all you do and say. The manner in which challenges are faced and handled will have as much of a lasting impact on the youth as any of the prepared activities or talks. Remember that we do not want to try to accomplish the Lord's purposes using Satan's methods.

FAMILY DISCUSSION

Family discussions led by the Ma and Pa are an important and necessary part of the trek experience. They may be held anytime and almost anywhere on the trail. They can help youth become mentally, spiritually, and physically involved. During the discussions the youth should begin to seriously ponder the Gospel as it relates to their everyday life.

The family discussions may be either formal or informal. The first one should be formal as it will set the tone for the rest of the trek. In preparing for the discussions, ponder the following suggestions:

1. After your meal, clean up, gather your family and sit in a circle with everyone facing toward the center
2. Share a pre-assigned pioneer ancestor story (either yours or someone else's in the family).
3. Ask the youth to look for parallels between their own lives and the experiences of the pioneers.
4. After the stories ask some questions to get the discussion started.
 - A. Begin with concrete questions like, "Which part do you remember most?"
 - B. Next ask questions about how they felt about these events.
 1. "How do you feel about the trek so far?" "Why do you feel that way?"
 - C. "What are you learning from this experience?" "Can you think of similar situations in your life?"
 1. "We may all want to think and ponder how our trek through life is similar to the trek the pioneers made".
 - D. Have someone share scriptures that are relevant to the discussion.
 - E. Close with your testimony.

Below are some general ideas to help you with meaningful meetings:

1. Remember this is a time for sharing and expressing feelings and ideas about the experience, life, or the Gospel. Your responsibility is to initiate the sharing.
2. If you do not know where to start, begin at a point in the circle and have each one respond in turn to a question. Then ask them why they responded the way they did. Then continue that process around the circle.
3. For many this will be a new experience. Encourage everyone to share but do not force anyone. Listen carefully to what each one says and give reinforcement. However, don't overdo the compliments; they will become forced and insincere.
4. It is alright for the youth to express negative feelings. Don't let others laugh at what is said.

5. Make sure the youth know there are no wrong answers. It doesn't matter if their stories or feelings seem out of line. What matters is that everything is kept sincere.