Dear Merrie-Woode Staff,

We have some exciting news to share with you regarding this summer! We are sure you can agree that the relationships we build with campers and fellow staff members are the most important part of what we do at camp, and what sticks with us most at the end of a summer are the friendships we made. We are always looking for ways to feel more connected to one another.

Our most recent work toward deeper connections at camp was our "Unplugged" policy that requires campers to leave electronics at home and asks staff to not use electronics in front of campers. Although the policy is wildly successful with campers and their families, we find that it becomes increasingly challenging for staff to follow the policy's expectations. **To that end, we will be cell phone, tablet, and laptop free this summer.** We believe that by fully setting aside our electronic devices, we can be truly connected to the people around us.

In previous years, our staff could keep their electronics in the Ark (counselor lounge) and only use them when not tending to other responsibilities. We recognize that this is challenging for our staff because having accessible electronics makes all of us more likely to disconnect from our daily activities. Technology was discussed in our recent Leadership Weekend, in which nearly twenty counselor leaders voted unanimously in support of going cell phone, tablet, and lap top free! The group recognized that when electronic devices are available, our attention is never fully in the moment. Consider how powerful your relationships will be with your campers and fellow staff members when you are not worried about what text is waiting for your attention or how many notifications are buzzing on your cell phone.

Perhaps most importantly, we feel that removing electronic devices from camp returns our staff to the days of our founder, Dammie Day, and Merrie-Woode's original mission. Merrie-Woode has always been a place where girls can cast off their street clothes, escape the pressures of their daily lives, live as sisters, and return to a simpler life. Dammie wanted all of us to feel a greater sense of appreciation for the natural world and the people we spend time with without the distractions of city life. We believe this change will allow us to quiet our souls and find the peaceful moments that Dammie and her campers enjoyed while soaking in the stories and laughter of our camp community.

We are aware that this will be a significant challenge for most of us, but we believe the results will be worth the challenge. We hope you will think this through and make the choice to join us this summer by signing the revised policy as we commit to being **Unplugged and Fully Connected** to the people we will live and work with this summer.

Sincerely,

Denice and Jim Dunn

Unplugged and Fully Connected Policy

The Logistics of this opportunity:

- All cell phones and laptops will be collected and stored in the Main Office while you are on duty and will be distributed to you for your day off and short night off.
- Cell phones, tablets, and laptops will be turned back in at the end of your time off.
- If you are a commuting staff member, please leave your electronic devices in your car while you are working in camp.
- Cell phones, tablets, and laptops will not be available for breaks during the day or in the evenings after campers are asleep.
- You will have access to the cabin iPod (provided by camp), the Program Office computers, and the Ark phones.
- You may bring your own iPod for running the camp road, but it must be a true iPod without smartphone capabilities.
- As in previous summers, college needs, interviews with future employers, and emergency calls can still be made in the Main Office.

Preparing for this new opportunity:

- This is too big a change to surprise you when you arrive, and we understand this may not be for everyone. Please consider this opportunity and let us know if you have any questions or concerns regarding this change.
- Consider that cell phones are relatively new. For example, imagine what camp staff did with their spare time just 7 years ago.
- During the spring, try to practice not answering a call or text message immediately while you are busy with other tasks. Practice not allowing the technology to dictate your next move!
- Purchase calling cards that can be used to dial long distance from the Ark.
- Provide your family and friends with your email address and the phone numbers in the Ark (counselor lounge). Those phone numbers are: (828) 743-7211 and (828) 743-7212. Let them know it may take a few days for you to call them back.
- Give your family and friends camp's mailing address (100 Merrie-Woode Road, Sapphire, NC 28774) and use this as an excuse to receive good, old fashioned "snail mail." Everyone loves getting more letters at camp!

"Unplugged and Fully Connected" Policy

I understand that Camp Merrie-Woode® is an "Unplugged and Fully Connected" community, which means that I will be present in every interaction and relationship I have this summer and agree not to use technology that is not provided by camp while on camp property. I agree to turn in all electronic devices to Senior Staff and understand that I will only be permitted to use these devices during my time off. I understand that violation of this policy can result in termination of my employment.