



the
great
ESCAPE

SMOKIES
Handbook

July 4 - 8, 2026



Ocoee Ridge
479 Frey Road
Old Fort, TN 37362



Hello Leaders!

We are so excited that you and your students will be joining us this summer! Whether this is your first Great Escape or you've been coming for years, we are honored that you've chosen to spend a week with us. As your Camp Directors, we're grateful for the opportunity to serve you and help create an unforgettable week for your group.

One of the things that makes The Great Escape so special to us is that we both experienced it firsthand as middle school students. The Great Escape played (still plays) a significant role in our own faith journeys, and now, years later, we have the privilege of helping create that experience for students today.

Katie serves as the Student Pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Bristol, Tennessee, and Stephen serves as the Ministry Experience Lead at Hope Church in Richmond, Virginia. Together, we share a passion for seeing students and leaders grow deeper in their faith and experience the life-changing love of Christ.

More than anything, we want this week to be a gift to you. Throughout the year, you spend countless hours planning, preparing, organizing, teaching, and caring for students. Our hope is that when you arrive at The Great Escape, you can set those responsibilities aside and focus on what matters most—having fun with your students, building relationships, creating memories, and being present in the moments where God is at work. We've taken care of the programming so that you can invest in your students without the stress of running the week.

Thank you for trusting us with your group. We are praying that this week is filled with laughter, adventure, meaningful conversations, and powerful moments that draw both you and your students closer to Jesus.

Please never hesitate to reach out if you have questions or need anything. We can't wait for a great week together!

Katie Arnold & Stephen Wagner
Camp Directors

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About YCM

Youth Conference Ministries



Mission

Love middle schoolers, tell them about Jesus, and support church leaders and volunteers so they can focus on being present and building relationships with their students.

We seek to:

- Present Jesus Christ to middle schoolers in such a way that they can make a non-pressured decision follow Him.
- Awaken a desire for Christ in young people so that they will return from our programs to their local church empowered to live for Him.
- Provide a place where we focus on empowering and equipping the church leaders so they can focus on building relationships and walking with their students.

What We Believe

We believe that the Bible is the true Word from God, and that it can be trusted in all matters of life, and that we need to model our lives after its instruction. We believe in the Trinity of God, who is comprised of the fully equal Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe that all people, young and old, need salvation because we are all sinful and unrighteous. Jesus is the only way to get right with God, and by trusting Him, turning from our sins and receiving Him, we can have eternal life with God in heaven.

Youth Conference Ministries is called to support and assist the local Church, Student Pastors and Leaders in leading and teaching young people to follow and trust in Jesus Christ.

Important Contact Info



Directors

Katie Arnold
karnold@fpcbristol.org
(770) 296-1671

Stephen Wagner
swagner@hopecentral.com
(601) 630-5746

Medical and Emergency

We encourage groups to bring med kits for minor cuts, headaches, allergies, etc. However, if you have a medical need on campus, we will have a nurse available. The camp nurse is available to assess and give advice, but is not a doctor. In the event of an injury requiring professional medical attention, group leaders should inform the camp directors or nurse and then drive the camper to the nearest Emergency facility. Any injured camper **MUST** be accompanied by a leader to the Emergency facility. If your group does not have a car and an ambulance is not required, the Planning Team can assist in getting you to a medical professional.

Group leaders are responsible for administering prescriptions to any campers who require them.

GREAT ESCAPE CAMP NURSE

Gabby Leche
(504) 912-9414

NEAREST URGENT CARE

Bradley-Polk Walk-In Clinic
119 Whitewater Dr, Ocoee, TN 37361
(423) 299-9435
8am-6pm

NEAREST HOSPITAL/ER

Tennova Healthcare- Cleveland
2750 Executive Park NW, Cleveland, TN 37312
(423) 559-6000



This year's theme explores what it means to be wanted by God. The prophet Isaiah tells us that God chooses us, is with us, and will never leave us. Those truths are a big deal to young people in an age where they have what they think is everything they could ever want at the tips of their fingers but are left with a feeling of loneliness. Through quiet time, small groups, programs, and relationships, students will hear how they are pursued by God not because of what they have done or can do, but because of who they are and who God is. God is a place where they can find their strength and their help and know that they are **WANTED.**

I have called you back from the ends of the earth, saying, 'You are my servant.' For I have chosen you and will not throw you away. Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

ISAIAH 41:9-10

DAILY BREAKDOWN

NIGHT 1

Main Point: You are known and seen

Scriptures: Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 41:9-10

NIGHT 2

Main Point: God's pursuit of us

Scriptures: Romans 6:23; Luke 19:10; Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:1-3

NIGHT 3

Main Point: You can't be thrown away or rejected

Scriptures: Romans 8:31-35; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Peter 2:10; John 1:12; Isaiah 43:1

NIGHT 4

Main Point: Now what?

Scriptures: John 5; John 4



PLATFORM



Morning Speaker
Logan Weber



Evening Speaker
Scott Castleman



Worship Leader
Jarius Mullen

One of the things that makes Great Escape Smokies so much fun is how our camp theme comes to life in every part of the week! From games and recreation to crafts, small groups, skits, team names, decorations, and special activities, you'll find the theme woven throughout the entire camp experience.

We encourage churches, leaders, and students to join in the fun by bringing costumes, props, and themed clothing. Just be sure that anything you bring is safe, appropriate, and camp-friendly.

The excitement begins on Day 1 when you'll be greeted by our Work Crew dressed in western wear and introduced to themed teams and camp-wide decorations. We encourage groups to make "Wanted" posters for their students before camp and invite everyone to pack their favorite western attire. Cowboy hats, boots, bandanas, and denim are always welcome!

Since we'll be at camp over Independence Day, we'll also be celebrating with a festive Fourth of July party for Aftermath. Be sure to bring your patriotic gear—red, white, and blue outfits, flags, festive accessories, and plenty of American spirit!

Most importantly, participation is completely optional! We love seeing groups embrace the theme, but there is absolutely no pressure to dress up or bring costumes. Whether you go all out or simply enjoy watching the fun unfold, we're glad you're here. Do whatever feels most comfortable for you and your students, and get ready for an unforgettable week at Great Escape Smokies!

Schedule

Day 1

Time	Activity
4:00	Arrival
5:15	Leader Meeting
6:00	Dinner
6:30	Post Dinner Hang
7:00	Evening Program
8:40	Family Time
9:45	Aftermath

Days 2-4

Time	Activity
7:45	Leader Meeting
8:30	Breakfast
9:15	Quiet Time
9:45	Morning Program
11:15	Church Family Time
12:00	Lunch
1:00/2:45	REC Roations
4:30	Clean and Chill
5:00	Leader Meeting
5:45	Dinner
6:30	Post Dinner Hang
7:00	Evening Program
8:40	Family Time
9:15	Aftermath

Day 5

Time	Activity
8:30	Breakfast
9:30	Departure

Preparing For Camp

What To Bring

- Two sets of clothes per day** (including undergarments)
 - comfortable camp/recreation and wet/messy
- Long sleeves and pants for paintball**
- Shoes:** 3 pair total
 - closed toed, comfortable pair for walking around camp (shoes may get wet or messy), and shower/pool
- Theme clothes and accessories!**
 - We invite you to bring western clothes or any other way you want to join in on the fun!
- Plastic bags to carry home wet clothes/shoes**
- Pajamas**
- Sleeping bag or blanket/sheet** (twin bed)
- Pillow**
- 2 Towels** (bathing and swim)
- Swimsuit** (modest)
- Toiletries** (Deodorant, Toothbrush, Toothpaste, Soap... etc.)
- Sunscreen, Bug Spray, Flashlight**
- Light Jacket / sweatshirt** (low temperatures at night)
- Rain jacket**
- WATER BOTTLE** (DO NOT FORGET THIS!!!)
- Sealable snacks and/or money for snacks**
- 2 cans of Shaving Cream** (that won't sting) for Crud-War.
- Card games, indoor activities in case of rain.**

Additional Options for Leaders

- Ziplock bags, sharpie, container for student cell phones
- Med Kit for minor injuries
- Extension cord & power strip for leader phones
- Ear plugs for anyone who is noise sensitive
- Clothesline
- Pack of shop rags to wipe eyes during the crud war

We recommend collecting shaving cream from your students before you leave your church for easy accessibility upon arrival

What NOT To Bring

STUDENT CELL PHONES! We are a cell phone/electronics free camp. If students bring phones, we ask leaders to collect those for the week.

Valuables. Do not bring something you would be upset if it did not make it home.

Weapons, firearms, knives, fire hazards, and explosives

Waivers, Arrivals & Departures

Waivers

Waiver must be signed and completed before arriving at camp.

ALL Attendees: [YCM Medical Waiver](#)
[YCM Media Waiver](#)
[Ocoee Ridge Waiver](#)

ALL Leaders:

[Sexual Misconduct Policy Form](#)

Arrival

Address: Ocoee Ridge Camp
479 Frey Rd.
Old Fort, TN 37362

Please use directions to get to HWY 64/Waterlevel HWY in Cleveland, TN or Ocoee, TN going east toward Ocoee. Turn right onto Old Federal Road and travel 2 miles and turn left onto Horns Creek Road. Travel 2 miles and turn left onto Frey Road and take the first road to the right (this is our driveway) to reach the camp. DO NOT get on Highway 411 and try to reach the camp from there. All roads from HWY 411 have railroad underpasses on them.

Check-in for camp is between 4:00 and 5:00 PM. When you arrive, our Work Crew will be there to greet you and help you get to your cabins. Once you unload, students will be invited to the pavilion for fun and games while leaders complete check-in at the Leader Lounge! Once leaders are checked in, your group can continue to hang out at the Pavilion or unpack until dinner.

Departure

Groups are asked to depart by 9:30 AM on Thursday morning. Breakfast will be served at 8:30 AM in the Dining Hall. If your group plans to leave before breakfast, please let a director know.

When leaving, please make sure all trash is bagged in bunk rooms including clothing and shoes that are being thrown away.



Recreation Rotations (Rec)

Wave Pool & Waterslides

Experience 6.5 feet waves in the 300,000 gallon wave pool with two 40ft waterslides or relax around the pool deck and catch some sun!

Paintball

Enjoy the large paintball field, that features varied terrain, creative obstacles and a capture-the-flag experience your group won't forget!

Aerial Adventure & Ziplines

The Aerial Adventure will take you 30 feet off the ground, going through a total of 15- bridge, rope and cable mazes. The last element is sure to take your breath away! Get a an adrenaline high by going down the ziplines or defying gravity with the climbing wall!

Pavilion & Rec Field

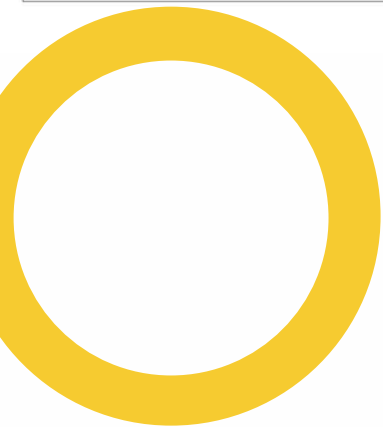
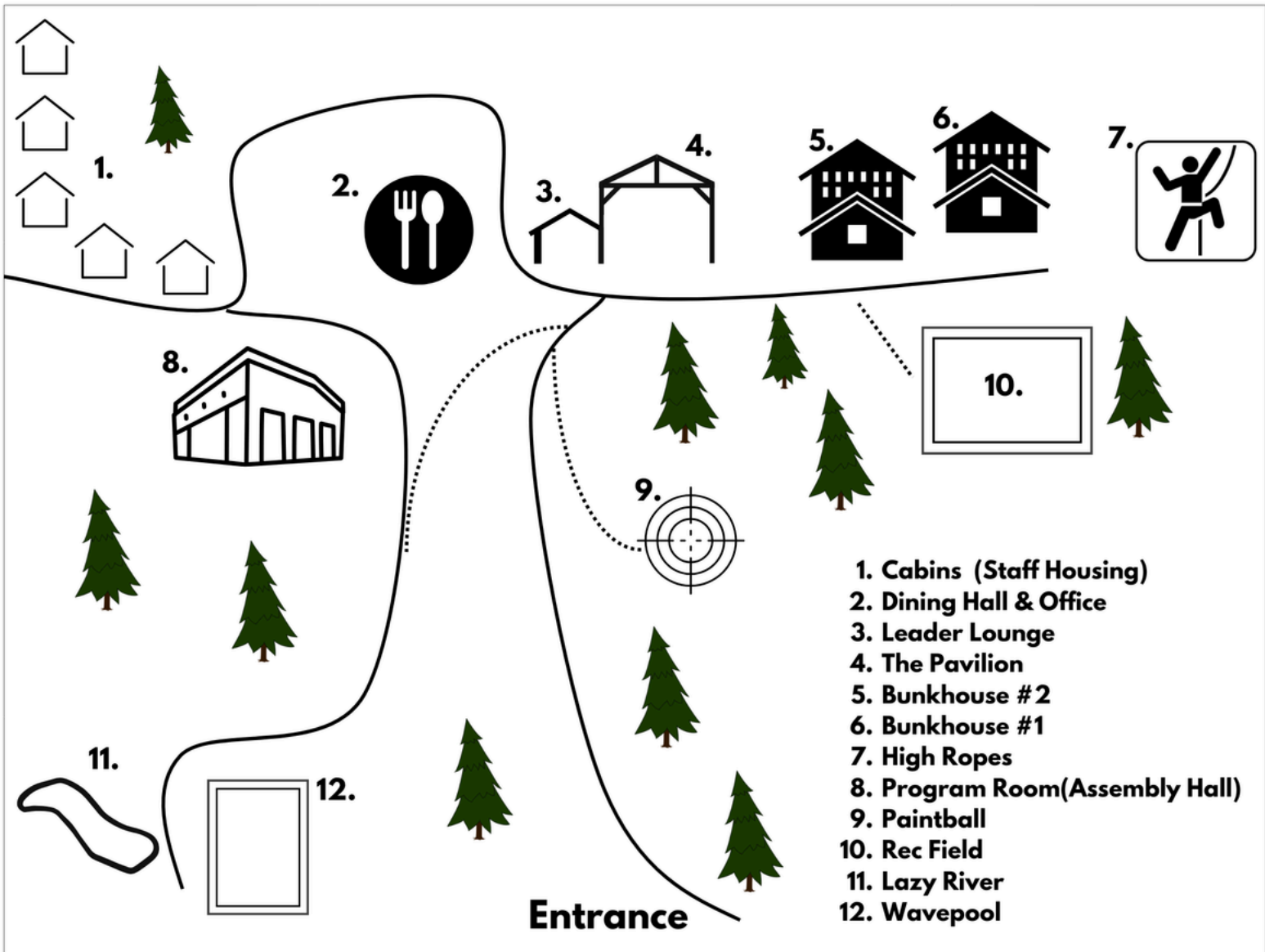
- **The Pavilion** houses basketball, pickleball and 9 square in the air for free time. During Rec rotations, the Pavilion will have a few games set out or anyone who needs an additional place to play as well. The Pavillion also comes with one of the best views of the Smokie Mountains!
- **The Rec Field** will be the home to our annual CRUD WAR!

Lazy River

The Lazy River is the newest adventure at Ocoee Ridge. Most would say it's not very lazy. Whether you are floating in a tube or swimming, this river will leave you churning with with fun!

******During Clean and Chill, there will be games at the Pavilion and games/crafts in Bunk House 2 Lobby***

Camp Map



FAQs

What's housing like?

Bunk rooms sleep up to 18 people, with bunk beds arranged along the walls and open space in the middle of the room. Each bunk room has a bathroom with 3 showers, 2 toilets, and 2 sinks. There is enough floor space for two air mattresses if preferred.

What's Church Family Time?

Church Family Time is an opportunity for leaders to connect and debrief with their group. Leaders might ask questions like:

- What did you hear today?
- What stuck out to you?
- Anything you didn't agree with?
- Do you have any questions?

Leaders can choose to split their group by age or gender to create a more comfortable small group setting. Speakers will provide discussion questions to guide these conversations.

Do leaders participate in recreation?

YES! Recreation is where relationships are built, and leaders have the chance to set the tone for the group. When leaders are fully engaged and bring enthusiasm, students will follow! If equipment is limited, please allow students to have first dibs. Recreation is a time to encourage students and help them feel included. Set your students up to have winning moments—be mindful not to dominate the games or activities. Keep your competitive spirit in check!

Can we bring snacks and drinks for our group?

Yes! You're welcome to bring and keep snacks and drinks in your bunk room. However, please note that we will not have refrigerator space available for each group.

FAQs



Can students have phones/electronics at camp?

The Great Escape is a *phone/electronics-free camp* to ensure safety and privacy for all. Phones in rooms or bathrooms violate privacy, and we cannot monitor what's shared on these devices. To create a safe environment for everyone, we ask that any phones or electronics used for travel are collected by leaders upon arrival and kept secure throughout the week.

What's for purchase at camp?

The Great Escape will be selling t-shirts and merch ranging from \$15-\$20. Ocoee Ridge has a store full of merch and concessions with prices ranging between \$4-\$35.

What's the Leaders Lounge?

The Leader Lounge is the hub for all leader meetings and a quiet place for leaders to gather, fellowship, and recharge. It's also where you can check in with camp directors. It is open all day long and our camp nurse will be stationed there.

If our students bring medication, do we turn it in or keep it?

We ask all group leaders to keep and administer any medications for your students. The camp nurse will have a limited supply of over-the-counter medications for emergencies. If a student requires medication that needs refrigeration, leaders may store it in the Leader Lounge refrigerator. Please ensure it is clearly marked.

Who are the point people at camp?

The directors do their best to be available before, during, and after camp —save their numbers and feel free to reach out anytime! While camp is in session, there will always be a planning team member stationed in the Leader Lounge to answer questions and assist church leaders.

