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Packages at Greene Family Camp

At GFC, or any camp, receiving mail is one of the highlights of a camper's day. However, over the past several years, we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of packages arriving each day. This means the amount of package contents thrown away or left in cabins when the campers depart has also increased.

We have decided to implement a change for this upcoming summer, and we'd like you to discuss it with your children to prepare them and manage expectations prior to the summer.

After much discussion with our staff, camper parents, the Greene Family Camp Board of Directors, and directors of other summer camps, we've decided to implement a **no package policy** this summer, and we will be asking for your feedback at the end of the summer. **We will continue to accept an unlimited number of large flat envelopes up to 12"x15" for magazines, photos, or small books, no more than 1" thick. Any "lumpy" envelopes will be opened by the mail room director or staff.** Packages any larger will either be held at the office to be picked up on closing day or will be returned to the sender at the sender's own expense.

Our conversations with each group revolved around just a few key pieces of information:

1. **Kehillah - Community.** Some of our campers receive many packages while some receive none at all. The reasons why vary, but it still creates a sense of competition and "haves and have-nots." Camp should be a community where each camper feels they are valued and treated equally. Other Jewish overnight camps that have instituted similar no-package policies report that this change lifted the burden from parents, campers, and camp staff, and it has had a tremendously positive impact on the camp community.
2. **Food/Candy/Gum.** This is not only a health concern due to food allergies, it is also a safety concern as we know food draws bugs and critters into cabins. Campers receive balanced meals with many options, as well as snacks each day (and don't forget the candy or soda they can choose occasionally!) Sending these items to camp and hiding them in packages teaches our campers the rules do not apply to them or their parents. Food, candy and other inappropriate items will be confiscated, disappointing the camper.
3. **Sustainable Environment.** We have discovered that most of the waste, litter, and rubbish generated in our cabins comes from the contents and shipping materials of care packages. Many parents have told us it is expensive and burdensome to fill and mail packages with toys their campers would not typically use at home, yet they feel pressured to do so during camp. We would like to better model sustainable living by not consuming as much in such a wasteful way.

Of course, we understand that sometimes sending items to camp will be necessary. If you camper has forgotten something (for example, a teddy-bear they need to feel comfortable or to fall asleep) or needs something replaced (athletic shoes or additional sunscreen), you will be able to send those items. Please contact us at camp prior to mailing the items. You can call our camp office at 254-859-5411 or email gfc@urj.org and we will be able to discuss the need and the best way for you to send the item to our Camper Care team for delivery to your camper.

Birthdays at camp are special. Don't worry - campers celebrating a birthday at camp receive something special to share with the whole cabin, in addition to the cookie cake and celebration at lunch. Counselors also receive decorations for the bunk ahead of time. Celebrating a birthday is special and unique at camp. Please do not send a cake or other treats for the birthday child.

Remember.... The best type of mail a camper can receive is an interesting and interested letter.

To avoid potential frustration, please share this policy with your camper, other family members and friends. We encourage you to send an occasional book, magazine, or gift but remember that an interesting and interested letter or email is the best 'care package.' This new policy puts us in line with the policies of many other camps. We hope you agree that this is a positive change, and we are grateful for your cooperation. Thank you in advance for doing your part to ensure that Greene Family campers live according to their values and principles.