



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## **What is Y Guides?**

YMCA Indian Guides or Y Guides, along with Trailblazers is a program designed to strengthen the relationship between a parent and a child.

## **Why does Y Guides exist?**

During their elementary school years, children learn rapidly, becoming much more aware of the world around them. They begin to see things differently and ask questions about who they are, where they came from and why things are as they are. During this time, children tend to see their parents as guides, teachers and heroes. They start to understand that parents protect and nurture them. Ideally, during this period, we learn how to *talk* with our children more than *at* them. A strong relationship is based on our ability to ask open-ended questions that help our children think and move beyond simple yes or no responses. During these years, we strive to invite our children to accept challenges and opportunities, celebrate accomplishments and face fears.

YMCA of the USA has designed the Y Guides program to assist parents and their children on a journey of discovery. While activities with the whole family are important, we see tremendous value in supporting and strengthening the ability of a parent and his or her child to communicate at an early age in ways that are caring, honest, respectful and responsible. We seek to encourage parents to “get to know your kid while your kid is still a kid.”

For these reasons, we have designed the program for one parent and one child to participate together for most activities. If this dynamic is not practical for certain families, be flexible and work with them to develop a structure within the program that accommodates their needs.

## **Who participates in Y Guides?**

Y Guides is designed for parents (or other significant adults in children’s lives) and their children ages 5 through 9. The trailblazer program is for children older than 9 and their parents to continue the journey. In this program, the children begin to take more leadership and responsibility in the events. In both programs, an adult and child must attend activities together. In Y Guides, the parent is the Guide, and the child is the Explorer.



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### **What do Y Guide participants do?**

The YMCA groups parent-child pairs into "tribes" that meet on a regular basis in each others' homes, usually biweekly or monthly. Occasionally, several tribes come together to participate in larger activities such as campouts, parties or parades. These outings are called *Federation Events*.

The core of the Y Guides program is these tribe and Federation events. Typical activities include ceremonies, games, crafts, songs, stories, skits and outdoor pursuits such as camping, hiking and swimming.

### **Y Guides Values and Direction**

The program's focus is on the adventures of a parent and child. Also a focus is their Tribes and the Federation. At the forefront of the program are the patch awards, which give members a sense of direction and an inspiration for activities. These awards are broad enough in scope to allow for variety and creativity in designing activities.

The four main direction points are the essential components of the program. They are represented by the compass patch participants receive when they join the program.

- The **Family** is True North—the focal point of the program.
- **Nature** and the camping experience are integral parts of the program.
- The spirit of the program is experienced through belonging to a small **Community**, the tribe.
- **Fun** is the magic of the program.

The YMCA core values of **caring, honesty, respect, responsibility and faith** make up the other directional points. Along the journey, adults should teach and demonstrate these values as well as give children many opportunities to practice and celebrate them. Adults should also point out and discuss with children any behavior that is inconsistent with these values. Initially, these five values provide guidance in helping children select activities, make decisions and choose appropriate courses of action—both in the program and in their lives. As children



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grow, these values become their own internal compass. The Compass and patches allow you and your tribe members to personalize rituals, activities and events.

## **Federation Events**

Each year, Y Guides tribes in the Columbia YMCA Association participate in Federation Events in different communities and/or at different branches in the Midlands. These annual events are:

**Fall Long House** – Held between September and November at the Lexington Family YMCA – Camp Occaneechi. This event kicks off the Y Guides year with camping, boating, pony rides, skits, food, a beautiful ceremony and “gold rush”!!!

**Y Guides Kite Fly** -- Also held in October at the Jeep Rogers Family YMCA in Blythewood, SC. Tribes make or purchase kites and also make water rockets that are launched during this event.

**Christmas Parades** -- Y Guides tribes have floats in both the Lexington and Blythewood Christmas parades. Tribes are welcome to attend either or both of the parades and ride on the floats!!

**Pool Pow Wow and Rocket Launch** – This event is held in January. We cookout hot dogs, launch tribal or individual rockets and then adjourn inside the Northwest Family YMCA in Irmo, SC to swim and have water fun for the rest of the day.

**Y Guide Bowling Extravaganza** – Held in the early March, before March Madness, our extravaganza is a great time for families to get out and have a great afternoon of bowling, pizza and fun!!

**Spring Long House** – We are back at the Lexington Family YMCA, Camp Occaneechi to celebrate Spring and get into the promises of an approaching summer. We camp out and do similar activities to the Fall Long House with the addition of some “Spring surprises”. The perfect culmination to a year filled with fun and memories!!!