

FINANCE • REAL ESTATE  
**BUSINESS SECTION**

# Boulder's Camp Inc. for teen entrepreneurs

**No dumbing down for kids who want to start a company**

By **LISA DICKSTEEN**  
*IJN Boulder Correspondent*

Imagine walking into an auditorium full of middle and high school students on a summer afternoon. There are about 50 assorted seats — folding chairs, beanbags, a few small sofas along the walls. Two-thirds are full, and some

Camp, Inc., is one of several new camp ideas the Foundation for Jewish Camp green-lighted this year. Working in partnership with the Jim Joseph Foundation and the Avi Chai Foundation, the Foundation for Jewish Camp sponsored

**Boulder JCC's Jonathan Lev and collaborator Josh Pierce dreamed up this new camp idea**

kids are sitting on the floor. It's as quiet as a room full of adolescents can be; every face facing the stage, on which there is one man, talking.

No music. No screens. Nothing to click on or link to. Just a guy talking and a lot of kids listening. This is not summer school. There will be no test, and no one has told them to take notes.

Yet there they are, attentively listening, thoughtfully scribbling notes, intently making calculations, as Scott Yates, founder and president of Blogmutt (a Boulder-based service that pairs freelance writers with businesses needing content for their blogs), tells them how he created his company and what makes an entrepreneur successful.

This is Camp Inc., what dozens of campers call "the best summer camp experience ever."

Brainchild of Jonathan Lev, executive director of the Boulder JCC,

a competitive incubator program to attract suggestions for Jewish specialty overnight camps.

According to Lev, who has been involved in Jewish camping all his life, as a camper, a counselor, then as assistant director of Eisner Camp in the Berkshire Mountains, where the idea of Camp Inc., was born.

The fantasy of starting his own camp, however, was pushed farther and farther into the back of the freezer of his mind while he concentrated on his career, got married, became a father, and dove into his new position at the JCC.

When he heard about the competition, he chipped the ice off the frozen idea, thawed and heated it, added the input of his longtime friend and collaborator Josh Pierce. They blended until they had an up-to-date business plan and proposal for a camp focused on teenage



**Camp Inc. completed its first summer. L-r: Rebecca Perl, Oz Markman, Naomi Jaffe, Coby Mandell, Val Weisler, Michelle Jacobson, Eytan Markman.**

entrepreneurship.

Camp Inc., has completed its first summer and is already making plans to lease the space they used this year on Tommy Feldman's 135 acre property in Coal Creek Canyon for next season.

The property has been a camp on and off for many years, so there are already some buildings and bunks; a kosher kitchen was added.

In addition to the entrepreneurial focus, campers can swim, canoe, and kayak on the eight acre lake, learn archery, climb on the outdoor rock climbing walls, hang out in the hammocks hanging in the

woods, and enjoy Friday night and Saturday morning services together in the outdoor amphitheater.

Standing in the café, where campers gather to brainstorm, knosh, play cards and board games and organize impromptu ping pong competitions, Greg Sklar, who might be head counselor somewhere else, but whose title

here is business specialist, described Camp Inc., as "Google meets woods meets mountains, with ping pong."

In fact, the entire camp takes a field trip each session to the Google offices in Boulder, just to see what it looks like when an entrepreneurial idea really takes off.

The two inaugural sessions had

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**Sitting together, learning together, exploring together — the essence of camping with an entrepreneurial twist.**



**L-r: Josh Verbitsky, Rhett Gavson, Zach Schiff.**

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## BUSINESS SECTION

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**Coal Creek Canyon . . . eight acre lake . . . Shabbat . . .**

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Canada.

While most Jewish camps tend to be 60% girls and 40% boys, this one currently has slightly more boys than girls and is striving for an even 50-50 split.

Counselors and other staff are from England, Scotland, Hungary, Israel and throughout the US.

**Greg Sklar, who might be head counselor somewhere else, is 'business specialist'**

Everyone is Jewish — some boys in *kippot*, a smattering of fringes showing, and several girls in longer sleeves than the weather would suggest.

Lev, Sklar, Pierce (who is the camp's director) and everyone else working there talked constantly about the awesomeness of "their" campers, describing them as smart, sophisticated, enthusiastic and far more well-versed in business and entrepreneurship than anyone had anticipated.

They were expecting smart kids. This is, after all, a self-selected group who asked their parents to send them to camp to create their own company, instead of learning to

ing simplified or left out."

**B**ack in the auditorium, the campers are working in small groups to solve the problem Yates gave them: How many customers will he need to make \$1million?

He has provided the numbers for what he pays his writers, how many clients one writer can han-

dle, his fixed expenses, what he charges his clients, and other information, and he is walking from group to group answering detailed questions and marveling at the work being produced. Kids are crunching numbers, discussing scenarios, settling their own disagreements, and having a great time.

At the end, each group explains how they'd approached and solved the problem. Each answer is completely different, and not one of them is wrong.

During the first week of each session, all the campers brainstorm together about the types of companies they want to create.

Then they are divided into "com-

**Campers are divided into companies to launch a product or service through the skills they're acquiring**

waterski or play basketball.

Sklar mentioned a recent visit from an attorney invited to talk about copyright law. He put a Coke bottle on the ground and asked the campers to identify all the things about it that might be copyrightable: shape, color, sound, name, etc. A few minutes into his presentation, it became clear to Sklar that the visitor had planned something simple and was now revising his presentation on the fly in order to rise to the level of sophistication of the questions the campers were lobbing at him.

"People come in thinking they have to dumb things down," said Sklar. "And the kids are just not interested — they want the real deal, not-

panies" to work together to launch a product or service using the skills and tools they are acquiring through team challenges, visiting entrepreneurs, trips to local companies, and weekly "Shark Tank"-style competitions. They invent names, tag lines and logos for their companies.

Then they do research, conduct surveys, and create a business plan to present to their fellow campers and a panel of business people from the "real world" who ask tough questions about financing, long-term growth potential, market research, and profit margins.

Campers created interesting com-

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After hiking, campers enjoy presentations from working entrepreneurs or work together on their own company plans.

panies designed to meet a wide range of current and anticipated needs.

• **Cher's Closet** is an app that allows users to track what they have

worn and compare it from the store with what they are considering purchasing, and compare that with what their friends own — eliminating the

possibility of you and your BFF showing up at prom in the same dress.

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## Potential start-ups

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• **Thermal Case** is a special-ized carrying case that keeps cell phones from getting too hot or too cold while their owners are surfing or skiing or pursuing other outdoors activities.

**Among the companies:**  
**THERMAL CASE.**  
**SUN DEFENSE.**  
**TAP TASK.**

Thermal Case's research indicated that 56% of Americans own cell phones, and 85% of cell phone owners have had problems with their phones overheating to the point where they were unusable.

• **Sun Defense** is an arch-way that sprays people with an even coating of sunscreen. It is designed to be sold to the owners of amusement parks and beaches. The patron pays a fee and enters a series of arches from which the sunscreen is dispensed. The company's owners built a miniature prototype and demonstrated it by having a camper put his arm in where a customer would stand.

They determined that it would cost \$800 per unit to build and assigned a price tag of \$2,000. They make \$1,200 per unit and their customers charge whatever their market will bear for each use.

• **Tap Task** was created by a team with extensive knowledge of the



**TEE SHIRTS FOR ALL THE COMPANIES 'CREATED' IN BOTH SESSIONS**

Camper are proud of their companies. L-r: Josh Pierce, Lior Yaron, Yarden Kleiman, Eytan Markman, Kaylie Stenhouse, Eliana Goldberg, Val Weisler, Alex Chaing, Ira Norwood, Greg Sklar.

iPhone app market.

Their research indicated that the iPhone 6 will include NFC technology and they want to be the first to market with an app that uses that technology's ability to make a phone a wifi hot spot simply by tapping it on a pre-programmed sticker. If the sticker is on the table at your local coffee shop, tapping your phone on it will give you immediate access to the shop's wifi and bring up the main page of their website.

• **Neat Sheet** is an adhesive transparent sheet a student can put over any page of the textbook they are studying so they can write on it in pencil, pen, highlighter, marker — whatever they have on hand. When the course is over, the student simply removes the pages and resells the book for at least \$25 more than they would receive for a book with their notes on the pages.

The sheets are customizable for any size book and can be used to allow students to write in school-owned books as well.

To see the actual presentations of these and all the other companies, go to <http://www.campinc.com/experience/startup-teams/>.

In addition to creating companies, each team is required to develop an organization to which their successful ventures will donate some of their profits. They need to explain what that organization will do, what percentage of their profits will be donated, and why their company decided to support this specific cause.

The integration of the essential concept of *tikkun olam* is another way Camp Inc., incorporates Jewish values into everything campers do.

In addition to *tikkun olam* (defined by the camp as giving back to the world), campers spend time learning about and practicing *tikkun middot* (self-respect and a moral and eth-



**DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF CAMP INC.**

ical approach to life and work), *eretz Yisrael* (Israel is a start-up country with a reputation for growing entrepreneurs), *klal Yisrael* (encouraging connection among all Jews), and *Shabbat Shalom* (they do not

work on their businesses during Shabbat; instead they slow down, reflect, and evaluate).

"We are thrilled with the success Camp Inc. has had in its inaugural summer, inspiring young innovators and entrepreneurs to make a positive difference in the world — all within a Jewish context," said Jeremy Fingerman, CEO, Foundation for Jewish Camp.

"Our new specialty incubator camps are modeling innovation for the broader field, giving kids from across the country a place to follow their passions and hone skills, while still experiencing the joys of Jewish camp."

Information: <http://www.campinc.com>.

**'Our new specialty camps give kids a place to follow their passions, while still having the joys of Jewish camp'**

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