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MAY-JUNE 2025 Double Issue

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INSIGHTS



Lori Severson, WACO Executive Director

Dear Members,

As we learned from our Facebook members-only page, you need to have a sense of humor and laugh in this business to make it through the season! Here are some practical ideas to help you get through the season. Pick and choose the ones you think are right for you!

RIGHT PEOPLE, RIGHT ROLES (MATCH PERSONALITIES TO POSITIONS)

One of the biggest management challenges is placing staff in roles where they can shine. We've all learned the hard way that a square peg doesn't fit a round hole – like the shy, introverted kid who dreads leading the karaoke night, or the super social butterfly somehow assigned to solitary trash pickup duty. Research backs this up: if a worker's personality doesn't fit the job, even the tastiest carrot or sharpest stick won't motivate them. In other words, no amount of bribery ("I'll buy pizza if you run the scavenger hunt!") or scolding will magically turn a reserved maintenance whiz into a bubbly activities host.

PLAY TO YOUR TEAM'S STRENGTHS

Does your teenage employee love chatting and making new friends? Put them at the front desk or camp store where that friendliness is an asset.

JUST A REMINDER:

This double issue is brought to you by our friends at Constant Contact and our lessons regarding lists. Continue reading to double your newsletter pleasure with twice the content!

2x

P. 2 READ MORE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INSIGHTS, CONT'D

Got a detail-oriented work camper who takes pride in doing things just so? Maybe they manage site maintenance checklists or inventory. Your tech-savvy J-1 student might be great at running your social media or online reservation system, while the outdoorsy go-getter can lead nature hikes or kayak rentals. The idea is to **match roles to personalities** so that staff feel naturally motivated and confident. As one study suggests, personality is a strong driver of behavior, and if it aligns with the job, you'll get better results than any external motivation could achieve.

Speaking from experience, I usually find out all the "special" skills team members have on the day they are leaving! I once had a J1 student who was a brilliant computer whiz. I learned that when our computer system had a virus, he said, "I can fix it," and he did a fantastic job on his last day, cleaning toilets! I learned a valuable lesson that even when you interview someone in depth, they don't always offer up all the little talents they take for granted. This J1 didn't attend any technology classes at school, but his father was a prominent IT expert in Russia. It goes to show that sometimes not all your employees are aware of where you need help or where they can utilize their talents. It's essential to give people jobs that energize them. Remember the personality styles assessment. Look to see if they would love a job cleaning firepits, as they don't have to talk to anyone, or if they are creative and enjoy making signage.

THE LESSON: SET PEOPLE UP FOR SUCCESS. When you place staff in the right roles for their personality, they're happier and so are your guests.

"ALL HANDS ON DECK!" – FOSTERING TEAMWORK AND CAMARADERIE

Running a campground (or any small business) truly **requires a team effort from everyone**. You want your seasonal staff – whether 16 or sixty years old – to work together like a well-oiled machine (okay, maybe a slightly creaky machine at times). How do you encourage that "we're all in this together" spirit?

START BY SETTING THE EXAMPLE.

When the owner or manager jumps in alongside the crew during the Saturday rush – whether it's flipping pancakes at breakfast or unclogging a restroom (glamorous life, I know) – it sends a message that every role is important. Treat your work campers, international students, and local students fairly and with respect, and expect the same in return for how they treat each other. As one veteran campground owner put it, everyone on the team should be willing to step up when the unexpected happens to keep the campers happy.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION IS ALSO KEY.

Ensure that your front desk, maintenance, and activities staff all know how to reach each other and coordinate smoothly. Consider a quick morning huddle or a radio check-in at intervals – it prevents that "I thought **you** were handling it!" confusion. One campground owner I know hands out a simple contact list to every new staff member with whom to call for what (from "water pipe leak – call Joe" to "angry guest at site 12 – call the boss!"). When everyone knows their role and can easily ask for help, teamwork happens naturally.

DON'T FORGET TO BUILD CAMARADERIE.

During the busy season, taking time for little team-bonding moments is worth it. It could be as simple as a staff campfire after work on Friday (nothing like s'mores to bring folks together) or a goofy group photo in the afternoon when everyone's wearing their new campground T-shirts. We once did a "One Team, One S'more" night - laughter around the campfire truly helped our crew gel. Regular staff get-togethers or team-building events - even a quick weekly pizza lunch - foster a collaborative environment and solid working relationships. When your seasonal staff feel like part of a **campground family**, they have each other's backs. That means if the front desk is slammed, the off-duty groundskeeper doesn't hesitate to jump in and help, and vice versa. *Staff bonding around a campfire builds team spirit and friendships that translate into better teamwork on the job.*

IN SHORT, NURTURE THE TEAM SPIRIT.

Celebrate wins together ("Hey, zero check-in lines tonight - way to go team!") and encourage a culture where helping each other is just what you do. A crew that works well together not only lightens your load as the owner but also creates a friendlier, more seamless experience for your guests, and that's the ultimate goal. Work hard at catching them doing it right! That is key! We spend a lot of time identifying errors and bringing them to the attention of employees, but it's harder to recognize them when they do a good job! It's human nature to focus on what needs to be fixed and forget the celebrations, especially when things are super busy!

GAME ON FUN CONTESTS TO MOTIVATE YOUR EMPLOYEES

When the midsummer heat and fatigue kick in, a little friendly competition can inject some much-needed energy into your staff. Sure, work is work - but who says it can't also be a game?

Workplace contests are a classic morale booster: they gamify everyday tasks, making the job more enjoyable. A motivated and engaged staff will provide better service (and stay longer) than a bored and disengaged one.

Keep these contests fun and straightforward - the goal is to encourage, not to create cutthroat rivalry or added stress. For example, you might have a weekly challenge for "the team member who gets the most positive guest comment cards" or a contest for who can upsell the most firewood bundles or ice cream cones in a weekend. I've seen campgrounds host a "Housekeeping Olympics" where cleaning crews compete in silly tasks like the fastest cabin turnover (with quality checks, of course) - the winner receives a \$20 gift card or a goofy fake gold medal. One owner told me about a "garbage pick-up bingo" - staff received a bingo card with odd litter items to find, such as a flip-flop or a juice box, and the first to fill a row won a prize. It sounds cheesy, but guess what? The grounds were spotless and the crew was enthusiastic. Marking a piece of "mystery" trash and offering a prize to the person who finds it works great! One of my favorites is placing a scratch-off ticket on the

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INSIGHTS, CONT'D

broom. The first person to grab the broom gets the ticket. LOL, they look ridiculous if they go for the broom and don't start sweeping because there was no ticket!



The possibilities are endless: a trivia quiz about the campground or local area, a safety bingo, or an "Employee of the week" award where the winner gets to proudly wear a championship belt (we bought a toy wrestling belt for ours – our college-age staff members loved strutting around with it). PUBLIC RECOGNITION in front of peers, even if it's goofy, can make someone's day. And small rewards – a free pizza, movie tickets, even just a fun certificate – sweeten the pot. We also ensure that we mix up individual contests with team ones. For instance, set a team goal: "If the whole crew keeps guest satisfaction ratings at 95%+ this month, we'll host a staff BBQ or go-kart or any fun activity." Now they're all pulling together, not just competing.

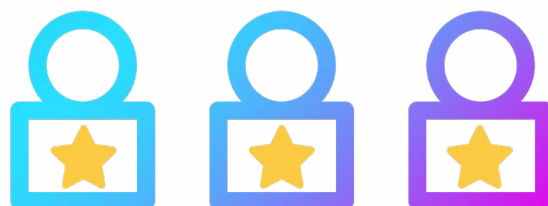
The bottom line is to KEEP THE CONTESTS POSITIVE. They should foster camaraderie, not cutthroat competition. Rotate the types of challenges so everyone's strengths get a chance to shine (one week a sales contest, another week a cleanliness or efficiency challenge, etc.). You'll find these little games can spark big motivation – suddenly that shy teen is eager to greet guests with a smile because there's a "most mentions in reviews" contest on, or the maintenance crew is hustling to win the "fastest campsite cleanup" trophy (yes, we had a literal trophy – it was an old lawnmower part mounted on a plaque!). When work feels a bit like play, morale soars, and your customers will feel the upbeat vibe.



**A TEAM THAT LAUGHS TOGETHER,
LASTS TOGETHER – HOPEFULLY THROUGH THE
BUSY SUMMER SEASON!**

train
em' up

Creating
Customer
Service
Superstars



Seasonal staff often arrive with wide eyes and minimal campground experience. It's our job to train them effectively so they can deliver the top-tier customer service that keeps guests coming back. I know, I know – training takes time, and time is something you don't have in abundance in peak season. But investing those hours upfront pays off tenfold when that teenage worker knows how to correctly solve a problem instead of compounding it. An untrained employee can cost you customers; a well-trained employee wins you customers.

So, what does effective training look like for a bustling campground? First, cover the basics thoroughly. Every staff member should be familiar with the campground layout, the FAQs (including WIFI password, bathroom locations, quiet hours, local pizza delivery options, etc.), and your key policies by heart. If you haven't already, compile a simple FAQ sheet or "cheat sheet" for common guest questions – it works wonders for quick training and consistent answers. Give your team time to review it and quiz them in a fun way ("First one to tell me how late the pool is open gets a candy bar!"). Encourage questions – a staffer who asks, "What if a guest wants a late checkout?" will now

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INSIGHTS, CONT'D

handle it much better when it inevitably happens. If you don't have the proper time to train, consider looking at [Campground Manpower](#). Sarah Krause has developed many in-depth courses that are super helpful.

Next, role-play customer service scenarios. It's a little awkward, yes, but extremely effective. Have your front-desk staff practice a smooth check-in with you acting as the guest (throw in a curveball question or an issue with a smile). Practice how to handle an unhappy camper: what do you say if someone complains that quiet hours weren't enforced, or that their firewood was wet? Training should include techniques for politely greeting guests, handling complaints, and resolving conflicts in a professional, calm manner. If your team has rehearsed a situation, they won't freeze up (or snap back) when faced with a real upset customer. Consistency is key – teach them the phrases and approaches you want to see. For example, train your staff to always apologize sincerely and offer a solution, or escalate the issue to a manager when a guest has a complaint.

Also, train for the unexpected. Walk your crew through emergency procedures (such as lost child, severe weather, or medical issues) so everyone knows what to do. Emphasize the importance of safety and knowing when to seek help. A well-trained team not only keeps guests happy but can also avert disasters by responding correctly to crises.

Finally, remember that training isn't a one-and-done dump of information on Day 1. People

retain more when you teach in small, digestible chunks and reinforce over time. Consider quick refresher huddles ("Today's 5-minute tip: how to handle a late check-in effectively") or pairing new hires with a "buddy" for their first week. Encourage your experienced seasonal returnees to mentor the newbies – it empowers them and streamlines the onboarding process. Yes, training

consumes some precious hours early on, but it more than saves you time in the long run by preventing mistakes and ensuring your customers receive excellent service. As the saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." In campground terms, an hour of training might save you dozens of hours dealing with avoidable guest issues later. And trust me, nothing feels better than overhearing one of your young staff members confidently helping a camper and thinking, "Hey, I taught them that!" That's what top-tier customer service

training is all about – equipping your team to take great care of your guests, even when you're not right there!

Read on to see other ways to keep from burning out during our peak season and the cost of losing a customer, along with how WACO can help later on in this issue!

Lori

Lori Severson
Executive Director of WACO,
Owner at Champions Riverside Resort



A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Scott Kollock, WACO Board President



MAY

Dear WACO Members,

As the outdoor hospitality industry continues to evolve, the need for a strong, consistent voice in the legislative process has never been more important. From zoning and taxation to environmental regulation and tourism funding, the decisions made in Madison directly affect the day-to-day operations and long-term sustainability of our campgrounds. That's why WACO remains committed to actively engaging in the legislative process and building collaborative relationships with policymakers and regulators across Wisconsin.

To that end, I'm excited to share that WACO has strengthened its legislative presence by partnering with The Knight Group, a highly respected lobbying team.

[The Knight Group](#) brings extensive experience in political strategy and public affairs. Their team is recognized for its proactive approach, strong connections with legislators, and ability to make a meaningful impact on issues that matter to small businesses and tourism-based industries. Their insight and reach will be instrumental in helping us navigate legislative challenges and identify new opportunities to support campground owners.

The board also considered hiring, in conjunction with the Knight Group, [The Welch Group](#), a familiar and well-regarded name in Wisconsin's political circles, who would join an independent lobbyist with decades of public policy experience and a deep understanding of the regulatory and legislative landscape. Bob's pragmatic approach and trusted relationships within state government make him a valuable advocate for our organization's goals.

Together, the Knight Group and Bob Welch would form

a dynamic and strategic legislative team that would work in tandem to represent WACO's interests at the Capitol. However, Bob Welch has yet to submit documentation regarding the language specific to the Property Tax Legislation he was working on with OHI, and therefore, we've opted not to sign the retainer for his services. Hopefully, in the future, we'll see that information and be able to move forward with a partnership, as we do feel the dual-approach to lobbying could be incredibly successful.

Until then, the Knight Group's efforts ensure that the unique needs of campground owners are understood and respected by those who shape the laws and regulations governing our businesses. With their support—and your continued engagement—we are well-positioned to influence policy, promote outdoor recreation, and protect the long-term health of our industry. We look forward to providing regular updates on legislative developments and working together to make sure our voices are heard where it matters most. See the office's Legislative update to learn more.

Thank you for your dedication to WACO and to the future of camping in Wisconsin! As always, if you have any questions on anything related to the board or our organization, feel free to reach out and I'll get you an answer.

Scott

Scott Kollock,
Board President of WACO,
Owner at Vista Royale Campground

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Scott Kollock, WACO Board President



JUNE

Dear Members,

Let's start with the most important notice of the summer from DOR. WI DOR Targets Untaxed Credit Card Fees – the WACO office received notice that the DOR will be auditing Wisconsin Campground Owners. This is the official notice that was emailed to you. It means they will conduct audits on this, not maybe – they will.

Nice Timing... That's what ran through my mind when I learned about the latest move from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR). Recently, the DOR has begun sending notices to select campgrounds regarding the collection of sales tax on credit card fees. *In short, if you have been passing credit card surcharges on to your customers without charging sales tax on those fees, you're going to want to pay close attention.*

WHY IS THE DOR LOOKING AT CREDIT CARD FEES?

The reason behind these notices is simple: Wisconsin considers credit card surcharges part of the taxable sale. The DOR even highlighted this in their [Wisconsin Tax Bulletin #224](#) (January 2024). They reminded everyone that any fee you add for credit card payments is included in the taxable sales price of the item or service. If what you're selling is taxable (like campsite rentals, store merchandise, etc.), then that extra

P. 8 READ MORE

September Board
Meeting proceeds the
Sept Fall Workshops:
LOCATION TO FOLLOW,
in NORTHWOODS
REGION

save the date

BOARD MEETING

SEPT 15 | 1 PM

IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND, PLEASE EMAIL

OFFICE@WISCONSINCAMPGROUNDS.COM SO WE CAN CREATE A PACKET!

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT, CONT'D

3% or 4% you're tacking on for credit card payments is taxable as well.

To illustrate, the DOR provided a couple of examples:

- **Selling a taxable item:** A campground gift shop sells a souvenir for \$599 and adds a 3% credit card surcharge. The surcharge is \$17.97, making the total taxable amount \$616.97. Sales tax should be calculated on \$616.97, not just the \$599.
- **Mix of taxable and non-taxable items:** A customer buys both taxable and non-taxable items (say, a \$28 hoodie and \$65 of tax-exempt groceries), and you add a 3% fee on the \$93 total. In this case, you can allocate the fee between the taxable and non-taxable portions. The taxable \$28 purchase would incur a \$0.84 share of the fee (3% of \$28), making the total \$28.84 subject to sales tax. The remainder of the fee attributable to the exempt items wouldn't be taxed.

In plain terms: if you're charging your campers a credit card fee on a taxable transaction, you must also charge and remit sales tax on that fee. If your point-of-sale system currently adds the fee after calculating sales tax (thus not taxing the fee), you'll need to adjust how you handle it. You might need to include the fee in the taxable base or manually add the tax; otherwise, during an audit, the state will come after that untaxed portion.

Remember, when the DOR makes a point to publish guidance like this, it means they're seeing widespread issues and they intend to enforce the rules strictly. ***"I didn't know" won't be a valid excuse because they've put the guidance out there for everyone.***

What To Do If You Receive a Notice

First, don't panic. These notices are essentially office audits focused on this specific issue of credit card fees. Unlike a full field audit, an office audit means you'll be working remotely with the DOR. They will ask you to provide documentation

(like sales records, receipts, and how you've been accounting for credit card fees) to verify that you have been properly charging and remitting tax on those fees. It's similar to a mini-audit on this one topic. Ensure you gather all relevant records, including any credit card surcharges collected and the sales tax paid on them. If you have indeed been reporting those fees as taxable, your records will support your claim.

One important caution: Just because the DOR is currently reviewing credit card fee handling doesn't mean they can't audit other aspects for the same period later. Concluding this targeted audit on credit card fees does not "close" that tax period to further scrutiny. The DOR could decide to examine other aspects of your returns down the road, even for the quarters or years covered by this inquiry. In other words, stay diligent in all areas of compliance.

If you're one of the campgrounds enrolled in the Sales Tax Audit Protection Plan (through our partner Holly Hoffman at [Sales Tax Advisory Network](#)), reach out to Holly right away upon receiving the notice. She has been tracking these inquiries and can provide a prompt and accurate response. If you're not already in the plan, it's not too late to consider signing up for this kind of support – unless you've already received a DOR notice. (Generally, audit protection plans won't cover issues pre-dating enrollment, so if the notice is in hand, you might have to address this one and then get on a plan for the future.) Holly has written extensively about the taxation of credit card fees and is well-equipped to help navigate this process. You can contact her at holly@salestaxlady.com for guidance or to enroll in the protection plan before an issue arises.

The big takeaway here is preparation. Going forward, ensure that your sales systems are set up

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT, CONT'D

to properly tax any surcharges. It's much better to collect a few extra cents from the customer now than to owe the state a pile of back taxes (plus interest and penalties) later. And if you're unsure about your setup, now is the time to ask questions – WACO and resources like Holly are here to help.

And 'tis the season for inspections! As you know, DATCP inspectors conduct unannounced inspections of campgrounds to assess compliance with state regulations. If you have a good inspector, they will set up a time to come, which helps a lot. These inspections cover various aspects, including water safety, sanitation, and facility maintenance. It's essential to have your campground ready at all times.

Regularly review your campground's operations against the provided checklists and codes. Staying proactive ensures a smooth inspection process and promotes a safe environment for your guests. For further assistance or questions, feel free to reach out to WACO or consult the DATCP resources linked above. Our DATCP representatives have visited WACO every year for the last 20 years, and they are always willing to assist WACO members. To ensure your campground passes with flying colors, take a moment to review the inspection preparation checklists provided by DATCP. WACO has these available for you, covering campgrounds, lodging units (such as cabins), food service, and pools, on our website. **Here are a few key things to double-check before an inspector comes by:**

- **Paperwork:** Have copies of important documents ready – your current campground permit/license, any approved campground layout plans or variances, recent well water test results, and your campground register (guest log). Having these on hand shows you're organized and operating within the rules.
- **Safe Water Supply:** Ensure you have a functional potable water source within 400 feet of every campsite, and that each water outlet/spigot has a proper backflow prevention device attached. (No sharing one hose between multiple sites without proper fittings – inspectors will check for this!)
- **Biggest issue:** Backflow preventors.
 - › **Campground regulations mandate the use of**

backflow prevention devices to protect potable water supplies from contamination. Specifically, Wisconsin Administrative Code ATCP 79.14(4)(c) states: (regulations.justia.com) BIGGEST WRITE UP IN CAMPGROUND INSPECTIONS. "Water service connections shall be provided with approved backflow prevention devices." This means that any water service connection in your campground must have an approved backflow prevention device installed to prevent potential contamination.

For a visual representation and further clarification, the Campground Inspection Areas and Key Items Summary provided by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) includes images and details about proper backflow prevention setups. You can access this resource here: [Campground Inspection Areas and Key Items Summary](#). This document outlines inspection areas and key items, including the requirement for backflow prevention devices on water service connections.

- **Waste & Sanitation:** Make sure sewage disposal systems (tanks or hookups) are secure and that all plumbing fixtures drain properly. Also, verify you have the required number of toilets and handwashing facilities for your campground's size, and that they're clean and stocked (soap, paper towels, etc.).
- **Fire Safety:** If your campground has any public buildings or rental units, keep fire safety equipment up to date. For example, have fire extinguishers tested and serviced annually, and regularly check any smoke alarms. It's easy to overlook these issues until an emergency occurs or an inspector points them out. The dates checked need to be on the tag.
- **Food & Pools (if applicable):** If you offer any food beyond pre-packaged items, you likely need a retail food license, and your snack bar or dining area will have its own inspection requirements. Similarly, pools must meet safety and cleanliness standards and undergo regular inspections. Be sure to follow the

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT, CONT'D

separate guidelines for those operations to avoid any surprises.

- **Campground Code (ATCP 79):** This code outlines the regulations for campground operations. Familiarize yourself with it here: ATCP 79 Campgrounds print off a copy to have it ready. *If you have any uncertainties during an inspection, it's appropriate to ask the inspector for clarification. A polite way to do this is by saying: "That's interesting. Could you please show me where that is in the code?" This approach fosters a constructive dialogue and helps ensure your campground remains compliant with state regulations.*

KEY RESOURCES FOR COMPLIANCE

To assist you in maintaining compliance, DATCP provides several resources:

- **Inspection Checklists: DATCP offers checklists to help you prepare for inspections:**
 - › [Campground Operation and Inspection Preparation Fact Sheet](#)
 - › [Lodging Operation and Inspection Preparation Fact Sheet](#)
 - › [Pool Operation and Inspection Preparation Fact Sheet](#)

Signage Requirements

Proper signage is a critical component of compliance:

- **Pool Signage:** A new requirement prohibits prolonged breath-holding activities in pools. Ensure you have appropriate signage posted. A sample sign can be found here: No Breath-Holding Sign
- **Camping Cabins:** For camping cabins constructed after February 6, 2017, specific requirements apply. Refer to the FAQ for details: Camping Cabins FAQ

While we are all working hard to make our money, the WACO office is staying current on legislation and is having

great success with the support of our new lobbyist and Tina's assistance. We are hopeful to get some much-needed things passed this session.

As always, please send me your questions, and I'll provide the answers. You might not always like the answers, but they will be provided, and we are here to give you the information. Any questions come directly to the WACO office your board of directors or myself!

Let's get to making money while the sun shines!

Scott

Scott Kollock,
Board President of WACO,
Owner at Vista Royale Campground

Amid all this talk of staff, there's one very important person we haven't discussed yet: you, the owner! Summer can be a marathon for campground owners and managers. You're working dawn to dusk (and then some), putting out fires (hopefully figurative ones), and trying to keep morale up among the troops. It's easy to neglect your well-being and overexert yourself. However, to lead effectively and maintain that welcoming smile for guests, you must also guard your energy and morale.



First, recognize the signs of burnout—and don't ignore them. Feeling irritable at minor problems, running on fumes (or caffeine), dreading going out to talk to guests, or fantasizing about shutting down and fleeing to your Florida home (just made that up) – those might be clues that you need a breather. If burnout creeps in, know you're not alone and take action: step away from the campground if possible; a few hours can make a significant difference. Be “Un-Campgrounded” for an hour! Shake up your routine, and remind yourself that you will make it through the crazy season. Sometimes, just a half-day away from the property – whether it's attending your kid's ballgame, taking a nap, or doing without your phone – can recharge you like nothing else. (Okay, I don't do a lot of this myself, but I'm trying to improve, like making time to go to a baseball game!)



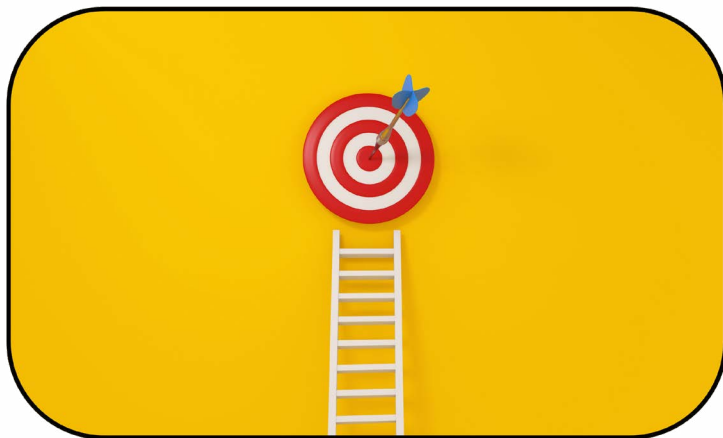
Day-to-day, practice little self-care habits. Stay hydrated (sound like your mother? Well, she's right – dehydration makes you sluggish and cranky). Try not to survive solely on Doritos and leftover pancake breakfast bacon; keep some healthier snacks around to fuel you through the marathon days. If you can, schedule short breaks – a 15-minute walk around the property in the afternoon or a quick power nap in your office can work wonders. I used to scoff at naps until I found myself nodding off at the computer and making silly mistakes. A 10-minute eyes-closed break gave me another 2 hours of focused work.

Also, lean on your team and family. Delegating isn't easy for us Type-A campground owners, but you must trust others to handle things at times. If you have competent staff, let them take the reins periodically while you regroup and refresh. Even if your “staff” is just your spouse or kids, communicate when you need a hand or a breather. Trade off duties so that no single person is constantly assigned the most draining tasks. Some owners have a rule to never do the same job twice in a row – if you cleaned the bathhouse today, someone else will do it tomorrow, etc., to spread the workload.

Humor is another lifesaver. Learn to laugh off the absurd moments (and oh boy, do campgrounds provide absurd moments). Did the pool turn an unsettling shade of green right before the big weekend? Did a camper's dog steal a hot dog off the grill and cause a ruckus? Sometimes these things are so comically bad that you have to chuckle. Sharing these stories with fellow owners – perhaps over a cold beverage at the next WACO gathering – turns disasters into

bonding moments. We know this from the fall workshops and the convention. Thanks to Joe Walters, we can now add a little humor to our WACO members-only Facebook page.

Finally, keep your end goal in sight. Why do we do this? Because we love seeing families make memories, hearing the laughter around the campfire, being our boss, and living this crazy campground life. Remind yourself that the summer frenzy is temporary. Come fall, you'll miss the sound of kids racing around and the sight of every site filled. When you're bone-tired, take a moment to chat with a happy camper – their gratitude can re-energize you. I used to keep little folder of positive comment cards and emails from guests; on really tough days, I'd read a couple to remember that it matters and that we're doing good work here. Keeping your spirit and energy high isn't just touchy-feely – it has a direct impact on your business. A cheerful owner who is out and about, greeting guests, sets the tone for the entire campground.



Take care of yourself, not just for your own sake, but because your staff and campers need the best version of you.

Hang in there – a well-rested, motivated you is the best asset your campground has!



SPOILER: IT'S MORE THAN YOU THINK!

We've all heard variations of the business adage: it costs far more to gain a new customer than to keep an existing one. In the campground world, this is 100% true – and then some. During peak season, it's easy to get into a mindset of "we're full every weekend, losing one camper isn't a big deal." However, let me assure you

that every customer counts, and the cost of losing even one goes beyond the price of just one campsite fee. Consider what happens when a guest has a negative experience and decides not to return. You haven't just lost their future business; you've likely lost the people they would have referred to you as well. Worse, these days, an unhappy camper might not quietly fade away – they might go straight to social media or online review sites and broadcast their displeasure to the world. Negative reviews are pure poison for a small business. Nearly four out of five customers say they've changed their mind about a purchase after reading a negative review online. And local companies like campgrounds are especially vulnerable – roughly 92% of consumers are less likely to book with you if they see multiple poor reviews. Ouch. In an era when almost everyone checks Google or Facebook ratings before making weekend plans, a single one-star rant about how “the owner didn't care that our site was flooded” can snowball into countless lost reservations.

EVEN OFFLINE, THE OLD TRUTHS OF WORD-OF-MOUTH STILL APPLY:

- **A dissatisfied customer will tell, on average, 9–15 people about their bad experience (perhaps their whole RV Tribe, and we know Campers are tribal!).**
- **And for every one person who complains to you, there may be 26 others who had issues but never said a word to your face. They'll just quietly never come back, and you won't even know why unless you're proactively**

Now let's talk dollars and cents for a minute. Estimates vary, but studies have shown it can cost five times more to attract a new customer than to keep an existing one. I've seen some analyses that peg it even higher. Consider the marketing, discounts, and extra effort required to attract a new camper versus the relatively simple task of making an existing guest happy, so they return (and bring friends). If a family who might have camped with you three times a year for the next five years gets upset and bails, that's a lot of revenue walking out the door – and probably walking into your competitor's campground down the road.

So, what can we do about it? Prioritize customer service and quick issue resolution, especially during the busy season. This circles back to training your staff – empower them to

resolve minor problems on the spot and to always alert you to larger issues. If a guest is unhappy, don't wait – address it immediately. Often, an apology and a genuine effort to make things right (such as relocating their site, offering a free night, a discount, or even a simple s'mores kit and an apology note) can save the relationship. Show every guest that you value them. And by all means, manage your online reputation: encourage happy campers to leave positive reviews, and respond constructively to negative ones. Interestingly, 88% of people are more likely to overlook a bad review if they see the business responded and tried to address it – it shows you care. I think the most dedicated and successful owners personally respond to every single review, good or bad, for their campground. It's time-consuming but worth it. A thoughtful reply to a bad review (acknowledging the issue and explaining how you're improving) can even win back a customer; about one-third of customers who get a response to their complaint end up updating their review to be positive. That's turning a loss into a win.

The takeaway here is that losing customers is costly, not just financially, but also in terms of reputation, which is everything in this social media age. Keep that perspective even when you're dog-tired and dealing with the 50th minor complaint of the week. Each guest interaction might be the one that determines if they come back next year with three friends... or blast you on Facebook. No pressure, right?

But seriously, invest the effort to keep guests happy. It's far easier to maintain a camper than to find a new one to take their spot. Your bottom line – and your peace of mind when you check your TripAdvisor page – will thank you.



Tips for Mom-and-Pop Campgrounds

I want to speak to those of you reading this double issue newsletter who may be thinking, “All these staffing tips are great...but what staff? It’s just me (and maybe my spouse) doing everything!” Many WACO campgrounds are truly mom-and-pop operations with minimal or no extra help. Running a campground with a tiny team (or a one-person show) is a special kind of challenge, but it’s also where creativity and bright management shine.

Here are some tips tailored for the little guys:

1. **Prioritize like a pro.** When you wear all the hats – manager, reservationist, toilet-scrubber, activity director – you quickly learn you cannot do everything at once. And that’s okay. Focus on the tasks that most directly impact your guests’ experience and safety. For example, cleaning the bathrooms and answering the phone might take precedence over weeding the flowerbeds or updating Facebook. As one seasoned owner advised, the three most important things in running a campground are “cleanliness, cleanliness, cleanliness!” (Keeping facilities clean heads off a world of other problems before they start). If something has to give on a hectic day, let it be a lower-priority task. Communicate clearly with guests if an amenity or service is temporarily unavailable. Most campers will understand a polite sign that says, “Office closed for lunch, back at 1:00 – out checking campsites to ensure your stay is great!” They appreciate that you’re a human who needs a lunch break, too.
2. **Streamline and automate where possible.** Leverage technology and simple systems to do some heavy lifting for you. If you haven’t already, consider implementing an online reservation system – it can reduce hours of phone time and prevent double bookings (and you can respond to reservation requests after hours, at your convenience). Set up a self-check-in kiosk or a late arrival packet system so you don’t have to be physically present for every camper arrival. Use signage and information boards effectively: a well-placed bulletin with site maps, rules, and FAQs can answer many common questions when you’re not immediately

available. Let tools work for you whenever possible, so your limited human energy goes to where it's really needed.

3. **Build a network of support.** Just because you don't have staff doesn't mean you have to do everything solo. Can you trade favors or hire out specific tasks occasionally? Maybe there's a local teenager happy to work a few hours on Saturday to give you a breather (even if it's just to mow the lawn or take kids on a hayride). Perhaps a fellow campground owner nearby can share a trusted part-timer with you, or you and a neighboring campground could "swap" help on each other's super peak days. Tap into the WACO community – we've owners who've been in your shoes and may have clever solutions. Even your campers can be allies: you'd be surprised how a friendly seasonal camper might volunteer to organize a weekend event or keep an eye on things if you need to run an errand, especially if you've built a rapport. Don't hesitate to politely ask for help or accept it when offered. The campground community is generally full of good eggs who want to see you succeed.
4. **Embrace flexibility (and be ready to do it all). In a tiny operation, roles are fluid.** One minute you're unclogging a drain, the next you're making a PR announcement at the ice cream social. Be mentally prepared to switch gears and improvise – it's what you already do! The key is to stay calm and have systems in place to fall back on. For example, if you need to leave the office to handle an issue, have a sign-in sheet or a notice that tells arriving guests how to reach you (e.g., cell phone or walkie-talkie). Many mom-and-pop owners carry a radio or telephone at all times to be reachable. That said, set boundaries when you can – maybe quiet hours for guests are also "quiet hours" for your phone unless it's an emergency. Your sanity matters.
5. **Know that it's okay to close specific amenities or simplify offerings if you genuinely can't manage them with your limited workforce.** It's better to do a few things excellently than many things poorly. For instance, if running a full snack bar is too much, perhaps scale back to pre-packaged snacks or a self-serve coffee station. Guests will appreciate what is available rather than dwelling on what isn't, especially if you're upfront about being a small family-run campground. Many campers seek out mom-and-pop campgrounds because of that personal, homey touch. Lean into it: your size can be a strength because you

can offer a very personal experience. Ensure that the basics (cleanliness, friendliness, safety) are consistently met.

6. **Lastly, remember you're not alone. You may not have a large staff, but you are part of a wider network of campground owners.** Reach out to us at WACO if you need advice or just a sympathetic ear – odds are we've heard it or seen it and can help, or at least commiserate with you. In the same way we advise our staff to work as a team, we as owners are a team too. As one experienced owner aptly said, everyone – whether it's two people or twenty – needs to be flexible and do whatever is necessary to keep the campground running and the campers happy. Mom-and-pop operations epitomize that spirit. You're small but mighty, and we salute you!

Managing seasonal staff (or soloing without them) in the throes of summer is no small feat. It's often messy, occasionally maddening, but also incredibly rewarding when it all comes together. Through it all, don't lose your sense of humor or the joy that got you into this business in the first place. The peak season will test you – and your staff – in new ways each year, but with the right strategies (and maybe an extra cup of coffee or monster), you will survive and thrive. Place your people wisely, build that team spirit, add a dash of fun, train them well, guard your stamina, and never forget the true cost of losing a customer. Do these, and you'll not only get through the summer, you'll create the kind of environment where your staff and guests can't wait to come back for more.

Hang in there, keep those campfires burning (in the literal and motivational sense), and remember that WACO has your back. We're all in this wild ride together – and I wouldn't have it any other way. Here's to a successful rest of the season, filled with happy campers, hardworking staff, and maybe even a day off for you to finally enjoy that beautiful campground you've built!



BACKGROUND *checks*

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DO I NEED BACKGROUND CHECKS AT MY PARK?

Camping can be a fun and enriching way to enjoy time in the great outdoors and operating a successful campground is dependent on keeping things safe. You want every camper to have a great experience at your campground, which is why it's crucial to consider the safety and security of your guests and staff above all else. You're doing your best to protect your campers and your business. You have a well-trained staff. You have emergency procedures in place. But there may be a gap in your business plan! [READ FULL ARTICLE HERE.](#)

FOR GUEST SCREENING: [visit TenantAlert.com/hospitality](https://tenantalert.com/hospitality)

FOR EMPLOYEE SCREENING: [visit aGoodEmployee.com/Hospitality](https://agoodemployee.com/Hospitality)

- [Background Check Info Flyer](#)
- [Employee Background Checks Are Essential](#)
- [Should Campgrounds Require a Background Check?](#)
- [Why Should I Run a Background Check on a camper?](#)
- [About Background Checks \(info article\)](#)

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Members of the **Wisconsin Association of Campground Owners**, your association is working for **YOU!**

Saving on products and services from a variety of companies are available for you through **WACO's** affiliation with **Hospitality Connections**. See the participating providers below and click the links for more information or enrollment.

Here are direct links to learn and directly enroll in a few of the more popular companies and programs including the HC Member Savings Program.

[Click here for ALL participating companies!](#)

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We all need to send our guests emails, social ads, & use SMS marketing. Why not collect the data in one location that gives you reporting information, open stats and gives your campers the option to opt-out, keeping you in line with the CAN-SPAM act?

Constant Contact is available to our WACO members at a 25% discount!

CLICK THE LINKS BELOW FOR MORE INFORMATION

- [Constant Contact Info Flyer](#)
- [Constant Contact Services at a Glance](#)
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- [Info on Plan Offerings](#)
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SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The WACO Board of Directors, with the assistance of the Young Professionals, is proud to announce the launch of our 2025 Scholarship Program!

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PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS AGAINST FRAUD

*Respectfully submitted by By Kim Lantta, VP-Treasury Management Business
Development Officer at Lake Ridge Bank, a WACO Sponsor*

Scams related to businesses have become so prevalent that we often say it is no longer a question of “if” fraud will happen, but rather “when and how” it will happen.

In fact, businesses can be especially susceptible because there are more points of entry into your system (employees) and businesses generally have larger account balances, so a bigger payoff for the fraudster is worth the effort in their eyes.

A few simple actions can help [protect your business](#) and [safeguard your assets](#).

COMMON TYPES OF FRAUD

With the advent of email and text, cyber crimes have taken a more prominent role in raising red flags for scams. However, simple low-tech check fraud is still one of the most common ways to experience a fraud event.

Common examples of business fraud include:

- counterfeit cash or checks
- altered checks that are stolen, altered, and made payable to another person
- opening a bank account using a stolen business’ name and identification information
- ACH and Wire Transfer Fraud – from business email being compromised

One of the most basic types of fraud against businesses is someone stealing a check out of an unsecured mailbox – on either end of the route – and altering the Payable line to their name or a fraudulent business name and cashing the check.

In most cases, once money is taken out of your bank account, it is gone and cannot be recovered through financial channels. It now becomes a criminal matter, and money is rarely recovered even if the scammer is apprehended.

ACT FAST!

Unlike personal accounts that have up to 60 days to report an issue, **businesses usually only have 24 hours** to dispute an unauthorized charge or other suspicious account activity. This timeframe for businesses is mandated by the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC), which is different than consumer regulations. Unfortunately, it can be very difficult notice the fraudulent act within that 24-hour window.



Some simple suggestions everyone can follow:

- Monitor accounts daily
- Check your online banking and eStatements as soon as they are available each month
- Report suspicious behavior as soon as you notice a red flag

It's better to be safe than sorry. If you have a question about a transaction, we don't mind checking information and are happy to ease your mind. Most banks have tools in place to stop a transaction immediately if we catch it early enough.



TAP INTO TOOLS AT YOUR DISPOSAL



Check with your bank about fraud protection services. For example, Lake Ridge Bank offers a variety of Treasury Management tools to strengthen the security of your accounts and transactions. Many are free and simply require you to adjust account settings accordingly. Others may require a fee to activate. Some of the most effective protections include:

- **Use Positive Pay for Checks and ACH Transactions.** All checks and ACH transactions are scanned against a list uploaded by your business, allowing the bank to catch any altered or unauthorized items. These tools will help with reporting issues within the 24-hour window. Talk to your financial institution for details. A small monthly fee may apply.
- **Mail checks at the Post Office, not your mailbox.** And since you can only control the security of your mail on your own end of the transaction, we

encourage electronic banking whenever possible.

- **Sign up for e-Statements.** Paper statements from the bank pose an increased risk of falling into the wrong hands. They are delivered to a mailbox where it stays, unattended, for hours or even days. These documents have your account numbers, transaction history, bank name—essentially all the information a fraudster needs. Even worse, it reveals your balance information, so the fraudster knows just how much they can steal.
- **Adjust settings for account alerts.** Set up alerts through your online banking portal. Some helpful account alerts include notifications if your account balance goes above or below a set amount, when a specific check has cleared or a deposit has been made, or when your debit or credit card has been used (or when it has been used out of state). You can also get alerts about certain transaction types or transactions of a sizable dollar value.
- **Consider a business credit card.** Credit card companies offer additional protections for your payments. In addition, most cards offer card controls, enabling you to turn them on or off via your online banking app.
- **Freeze your credit report.** Freezing your credit report keeps fraudsters from applying for credit in your name. To freeze your credit reports, go to all three of the main reporting agencies and place a freeze on your account (TranUnion.com/freeze, Experian.com/freeze and Freeze.Equifax.com). Then simply unfreeze when you have a legitimate need for a credit check.

For help in reviewing your risk and establishing stronger protections against fraud, contact your business banker. We're here to help!



Registration Now Open for OHCE®2025

OHI® has officially [opened registration](#) for the 2025 Outdoor Hospitality Conference & Expo® (OHCE®), the industry's flagship event for professional development, business growth, and networking.

This year's conference will take place November 10–12 at the Kentucky International Convention Center (KICC) in downtown Louisville.

[Registration](#) options for OHCE®2025 include full conference access for both OHI members and non-members, with a special Hosted Buyer Program available at no cost to qualified decision makers from OHI member parks. Expo Hall access passes are also available for those primarily interested in visiting the exhibit floor.

OHI members can register for the full conference for just \$499 through June 30. Rates increase to \$599 on July 1 and to \$799 after October 1. Non-member registration is \$1,399. Expo-Only Access Passes begin at \$129 and increase later in the year. With over 50 breakouts, general, and networking sessions planned on a variety of topics from diversifying revenue to handling wastewater, there's something for every journey.

The learning, the connections, the energy, it all starts at OHCE®. This event is about investing in the future of your business. Whether you're just starting out or scaling up, OHCE® provides access to the people and ideas that move our industry forward.

The Omni Louisville is the official OHCE®2025 hotel and is located just a short walk from the convention center. Attendees flying in should plan to arrive at Louisville International Airport (SDF) on Sunday, November 9 and depart Thursday, November 13 to take full advantage of the conference schedule. A hotel booking link will be provided in the registration confirmation.

Ready to register for OHCE®2025? Visit OHI.org/OHCE.



Scholarships Available for OHCE®2025

The OHI® Foundation is excited to announce that scholarship applications are now open for the 2025 Outdoor Hospitality Conference & Expo® (OHCE®). Thanks to the generous support of the OHI® foundation, donations from OHI members and partners, a limited number of scholarships, covering the full cost of conference registration, are available to help make OHCE®2025 more accessible to outdoor hospitality professionals across the country.

Offered through the OHI Foundation, these scholarships reflect the industry's commitment to professional development and shared success. They are open to anyone working in or aspiring to join the Outdoor Hospitality Industry, and preference will be given to first-time OHCE® attendees. While the scholarship covers the cost of registration, recipients are responsible for their own travel and accommodation expenses.

Scholarship applications must be submitted by July 14, 2025, and recipients will be announced the week of August 18, 2025.

To apply for an OHCE®2025 scholarship, visit judgify.me/ohcescholarship.

WE'RE ALL EARS!

The OHI membership feedback form is your opportunity to share what's working, what you value most, and where we can improve, helping us shape the future of OHI to better support you, the owners and operators at the heart of outdoor hospitality. Your feedback ensures we continue to grow in ways that strengthen your business and our entire community nationwide. **Share your feedback [here](#).**

SALES TAX SNIPPETS

Navigating sales tax with Holly Hoffman,
Owner of Sales Tax Advisory Network



What Campground Owners Need to Know About Food & Beverage Sales

Operating a campground in Wisconsin comes with unique sales tax obligations, especially when it comes to selling food and beverages. Whether you're running a campground restaurant, vending machines, or snack sales, it's essential to understand how Wisconsin sales tax applies to these transactions.

1. Campground Restaurants & Concession Sales

If your campground includes a restaurant, café, or concession stand, the sale of prepared food and beverages is subject to Wisconsin sales tax. *This includes:*

- Hot and cold meals served at a restaurant or food stand.
- Snacks and beverages prepared or packaged for immediate consumption.
- Alcoholic drinks.

Exemptions for Grocery-Type Sales

Some food items are exempt, such as:

- Bottled water (not sweetened), milk, unsweetened tea, or juice (>50% real vegetable or fruit juice).
- Ice if sold for human consumption.
- Ice cream sandwiches.
- Bread, coffee beans, cookies, nuts, jelly, cheese, etc.

2. Vending Machines & Self-Serve Food Sales

Campgrounds that provide vending machines with food and beverages must collect Wisconsin sales tax on most taxable items, including:

- Soft drinks are taxable
 - › Examples: Sweetened tea/water.

- Candy is taxable. To meet the definition of candy it must be in bites/pieces, cannot contain flour, or require refrigeration.
 - › Pixie Stix are not candy because it is not in a bite/piece form.
 - › Twizzlers, Twix, and Kit Kat contain flour which means they are not taxable.
- Bottled water, if carbonated, is taxable since it is considered a soft drink.



Sales Tax Responsibilities for Vending Machine Owners

The sales tax is generally included in the price of vending machine items, meaning the vendor must report the taxable portion when remitting sales tax.

3. Snack Sales & Convenience Items

Many campgrounds sell snacks at their registration office, store, or clubhouse. The taxability of these items depends on how they are sold:

SALES TAX SNIPPETS, CONT'D

- Food and food ingredients (general groceries) may be exempt.
- Ice for human consumption is not taxable.
- Snacks prepared or warmed for immediate consumption are taxable.

Considerations for Campground Owners

- Tax rates may vary depending on the county or city where your campground is located.
- If you sell a mix of taxable and exempt items, ensure your point-of-sale system accurately tracks taxable sales.
- Credit card convenience fees are taxable if they are related to a taxable transaction.
- Be prepared to remit sales tax to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue based on your total taxable sales.

Final Takeaways

- ✓ Restaurants, prepared food sales, and vending machines are taxable.
- ✓ Certain pre-packaged grocery-type items may be exempt.
- ✓ Vending machine operators must factor sales tax into pricing and reporting.
- ✓ Tracking taxable vs. exempt food sales ensures compliance with Wisconsin regulations.

By understanding these tax rules, Wisconsin campground owners can properly apply sales tax, avoid audit risks, and maintain compliance with state tax laws.



NAVIGATING PROPERTY TAX & SALES TAX COMPLIANCE FOR CAMPGROUNDS



Important Guidance from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Campground owners in Wisconsin are often faced with questions regarding property tax reimbursement and whether it can legally be passed on to customers. The Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR) has provided clarification on this issue, helping owners remain compliant while ensuring fair taxation practices.

Q: CAN CAMPGROUNDS INVOICE CUSTOMERS FOR PROPERTY TAX REIMBURSEMENT?

Many campground customers have raised concerns about being charged for property tax separately, stating that campground owners are not taxing authorities and may be violating state regulations.

A: DOR RESPONSE:

Yes, campground owners can include property tax as part of their seasonal agreement payments (lease/contract payments in their terms) with customers. **However, owners cannot issue a**



Contact Holly Hoffman, Owner of Sales Tax Advisory Network at our new office: 1052 Main St Ste 201, Stevens Point WI 54481
Ph: 715-883-1299 | holly@salestaxlady.com



SALES TAX SNIPPETS, CONT'D

separate invoice for property tax reimbursement unless it is already incorporated into the seasonal agreement (contract/lease in their terms).

WHY? Property tax is assessed based on county records, and the tax liability falls on the campground owner—not individual campers. The only legal method to recover property taxes is to include them within a formal lease or contract payment structure.

Q: ARE PROPERTY TAX REIMBURSEMENT FEES SUBJECT TO SALES TAX?

Another common question from campground owners is whether property tax charges are subject to Wisconsin sales tax, especially if itemized separately from admission fees.

A: DOR RESPONSE: Yes, property tax reimbursement fees are subject to sales tax—even if they are separately stated. According to Wis. Stats. s. 77.51(15b)(a)2, these charges are not considered a separate or optional fee, meaning they fall under taxable campground seasonal (lease) agreements.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CAMPGROUND OWNERS

- If property tax reimbursement is included in a lease or contract, it is legally allowed but will be subject to sales tax.
- Owners cannot invoice separately for property tax unless structured within the lease.
- Clearly outlining tax charges within a contract helps prevent disputes and ensure compliance.

BEST PRACTICES FOR COMPLIANCE

Campground owners looking to navigate property tax assessments and sales tax obligations should consider the following:

- Review all lease agreements to ensure property tax inclusion is properly structured.
- Communicate clearly with customers to avoid misunderstandings regarding tax policies.
- Consult a tax professional or refer to SalesTaxLady.com for expert guidance on compliance.

Keeping your campground legally compliant and transparent about tax obligations ensures a smoother business operation while protecting owners from unexpected regulatory issues.

Would you like more information on sales tax compliance strategies for campgrounds? Reach out to SalesTaxLady.com today!





KEEPIN' IT LEGAL

Let's be honest. No one loves legal concerns, but we sure do love having access to a 27-year veteran like Mark Hazelbaker, our WACO Attorney, when those pesky legal troubles rear their head. We've created an email specifically for your legal questions at office@wisconsincampgrounds.com. Give the WACO office a call first to vet your question, and Lori can provide direction on the next steps.

Navigating Pronouns, ADA Reminders & Memorial to Bud Styer

Respectfully Submitted By Attorney Mark Hazelbaker, WACO Legal Counsel

THEY/THEIR; HE/HIS AND SHE/HERS: NAVIGATING THE WORLD OF GENDER IDENTITY

Campgrounds as employers and hosts face the same challenges as everyone dealing with persons with non-traditional gender identities. It isn't the issue that's new -- there are cases dating back to the 1960s of people changing genders and asking for modification of their birth certificate. The visibility of the issue is new. Transgender status has become a mainstream topic in the media. Yet, many of us have only become aware of the issues posed in recent years. We need to be aware of how to handle the matter in a fashion that is both legal and hospitable.

You may encounter a guest or employee who dresses or appears as one gender but whose name would suggest they identify as the other gender. It is important not to be afraid to address the questions you may have. Simply ask the person, politely, what pronouns they use. And then, use those pronouns to guide how you address them. It may be awkward. You may find it difficult or even annoying to do so. But that is the respectful and civil way to deal with it. Do not ask beyond their pronouns. Certainly, you should not ask "So are you really a girl?" or something even cruder.

You can -- both legally and properly -- ask an employee or a guest, "May I ask you what pronouns you prefer?" And then, address the person in the manner they have asked. If the person appears to

be male but requests that you use "she/her," please do so. As a matter of etiquette, it is certainly appropriate to clarify how a person wishes to be addressed. As a matter of legalities, it is appropriate.

Federal and Wisconsin laws prohibit discriminating against people on the basis of sex, i.e., gender. It is not legal to treat a person differently based on their gender. Under the U.S. Supreme Court's interpretation of the law, if an employer would not take action against a man for doing something, the employer cannot take action against a woman for doing the same thing, or vice versa. For example, if an employer would not discipline or fire a woman for wearing a dress, the employer cannot discipline or fire a man for wearing a dress. Under the law, if an employer would not fire a female employee for going

HE / HIS

SHE / HER

THEY / THEM

P. 26 READ MORE



KEEPIN' IT LEGAL

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Navigating Pronouns, ADA Reminders, & Sawyer County Updates

Respectfully Submitted By Attorney Mark Hazelbaker, WACO Legal Counsel

by "she or her," the employer cannot discipline or fire a male for asking to be called "she or her," or "they or them."

With respect to guests, public accommodation laws also prohibit discrimination based on sex. That means it is unlawful to discriminate against transgender individuals. The same etiquette and legal rules apply – ask politely, then abide by the individual's requested gender (or non-gender) pronouns. I'm aware it may be hard to accept non-traditional gender identities. Although transgender people have been around for a long time, the issue has become much more visible in the recent past. Certainly, members of the transgender community are speaking out, standing up for themselves, and demanding equality. It is perhaps the case that some advocates have pushed quite strongly, requesting not only acceptance but also approval. What you feel about transgender people is, perhaps, like what you feel about the Chicago Bears, something you certainly are free to feel. Sharing it publicly is a different matter as the law has developed.

I respectfully suggest it is part of our obligation as hospitality businesses. We owe it to people seeking to be our guests to welcome them as they are. I believe the campground industry is a welcoming group that can adapt to these latest trends.

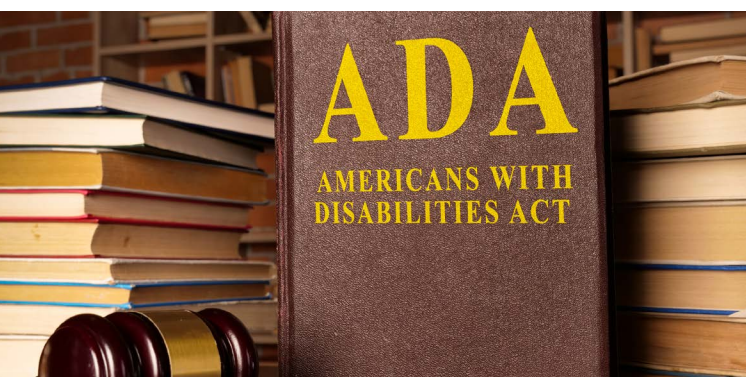
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT ACCOMMODATIONS ARE NOT UNLIMITED

Campgrounds are not required to overlook misbehavior or violations of campground rules because someone is disabled. This came up recently in a campground in Wisconsin which reached out for assistance.

A guest verbally degraded campground staff, causing a disruption at the campground. The campground determined that it was in the best interests of the campground to terminate the guests' stay and asked the guest to leave.

The guest communicated with the campground complaining that they were disabled and requesting an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act to allow them to stay longer at the campground. That request raises an important and very basic point about the Americans with Disabilities Act and accommodations. Accommodations are always a prospective -- future-oriented -- form of relief. A request for accommodation cannot undo misconduct that happened in the past.

In this instance, the guest's behavior was the reason for the campground's decision to terminate their guest status. The campground had no knowledge that the camper claimed to be disabled. Further, their disability had nothing to do with their misbehavior. So, the request for an accommodation, whether it was for an extension of time to leave or even a request to remain is not a reasonable accommodation.



By contrast, imagine that a guest applied to a campground and informed the campground that they had Tourette's Syndrome. That condition might cause a person to suddenly utter loud, sometimes profane and disturbing comments. The campground would have to decide whether it was possible to accommodate that individual. The request was being made in advance of the need. The campground would have to decide whether it would be consistent with its need to maintain a peaceable setting. It may be possible under some circumstances for a campground to accommodate someone with Tourette's provided that the decision is made in advance and with information.

This is an important point. Some people think claiming disability is an automatic "get out of jail free" card for whatever rule or standard violation they have committed. That is not the case. The Americans with Disabilities Act allows people with a disability to participate in the economy on terms comparable to those of people who are not disabled. It does not require businesses to significantly disrupt their operations or to subject people to disruptive behaviors.

SAWYER COUNTY MOVING TO AMEND AN ORDINANCE WHICH IMPROPERLY RESTRICTED USE OF CAMPING CABINS

The Sawyer County Zoning Committee recently voted to send a proposal for review by the Towns in Sawyer County rescinding unfortunate restrictions previously adopted. The existing ordinance prohibits installation of electricity, natural gas or propane, water and plumbing in camping cabins. The amendment was adopted a few years ago over WACO's objections. It has been used to prevent installation of camping cabins constructed to the new standards [\[SPS 327\]](#) approved by Wisconsin several years ago.

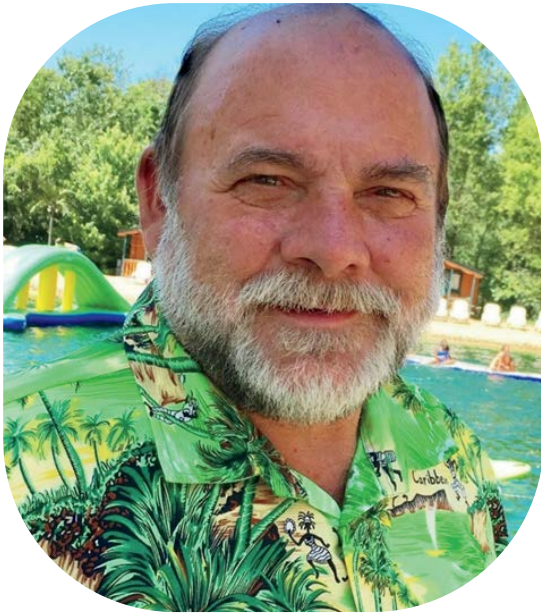


The Zoning Committee approved the proposal to rescind those restrictions after a lengthy discussion at a recent meeting. WACO spoke in favor of the repeal. Under Wisconsin law, amendments to County Zoning Ordinances require support of a majority of the Towns in the County. The ordinance is out for Town review right now. We hope that it passes and that we continue to be able to work with counties to stop them from attempting to impose unnecessary and undue restrictions on campground operations.



Use our online form to send legal questions to Mark! *Our legal hotline is one of your best WACO member benefits!* By submitting your questions to the WACO office first, we are best able to track and report on Mark's answers to questions that may be an issue for many members and put that data in one central place for you to refer to anytime! ***Should you choose to NOT use the hotline and contact Mark Hazelbaker directly, you will incur costs to your campground.***





REMEMBERING BUD STYER

Respectfully Submitted by Mark Hazelbaker

Bud Styer passed away on April 11, 2025. For those who shared part of our lives with Bud Styer, his death is far more than the loss of a person. It marked the loss of someone who could only be called "a force of nature".

Several weeks after his death, Bud's family held a memorial service. It is no coincidence that such a gathering is also called a "wake." The ripples and waves Bud created in his life were indeed quite a wake, one that will endure for many years. To an extent far out of proportion with his small stature, Bud was an enormous presence and personality. I have given considerable thought to what made Bud such a special person. I offer a few words that capture why he was such a special person and what his example offers all of us.

PANACHE.

The word panache is from the French language. It has come to be used in the English language because it simply does not translate. Originally, it referred to bright and ornamental plumes worn on a hat, plumes which splendidly distinguished an individual. In time, the word came to mean a unique manner of living and behaving with flair, dash, confidence, style, and a grand demeanor. If anyone had panache, it was Bud.

Of course, he was notorious for his Hawaiian shirts - his plumage. But there was so much more about him that was stylish, distinct, and confident in the extreme - always supported by his considerable capabilities and the results he obtained.

He consistently engaged and connected with others, sharing his latest ideas with them. He was always thinking about how he could do something new and interesting. He was not content to "plow the same fields." He never feared being identified with innovation, a new adventure, and something that would make a difference in the world. If all of us had even a small fraction of Bud's willingness to be unique, bold, confident, and to set a unique style, we would all be stronger for it.

ENERGY.

One of Newton's Laws tells us that objects at rest tend to remain at rest. Bud was an exception to the rule.

Bud Styer did more while he was suffering from serious kidney disease than many of us manage on our best days. At his peak, he was almost unstoppable. He possessed a zeal and a love of activity that few of us can manage. Everything about him was vigorous and full-throttle. It took a mortal illness to slow him down from the redline. Bud was not just constantly in motion, although he certainly was that.

Several of our campgrounds have purchased lemonade-making equipment. Bud not only bought it, but he also invented and built enhancements to the equipment, making it more productive. Bud took over a Campground from the Village of Marshall and constructed one of the longest train rides in Wisconsin at that location.

Bud repeatedly bought campgrounds, fixed them up, and sold them again, much like some people change their underwear. Along the way, he inspired a generation of entrepreneurs to see that by staying constantly in motion and never stopping, they could accomplish lifetimes of work in a matter of years.

One must ask - how did Bud manage to pull this off? He was not healthy in the later part of his life. Yet he kept right on going. He found a kidney donor and received a transplant, allowing him to return to work and build a new campground in Washburn County. How was this possible?

For me, the answer to that question was provided by conductor James Levine, who was asked how he had conducted more than 2,500 performances of 85 operas in his career. He said that the music energized him. And this was true of Bud. His love and enthusiasm for camping, for providing fun to guests, for building new businesses, and setting people up in successful campgrounds - that energy flowed through him. His love of what he did made every day an adventure for him.

VISION.

Bud started in the campground industry at a time when great changes were happening. He was part of them. RV camping is nothing like it was decades ago. I recall staying with my cousins at an RV campground in Illinois where the trailers were tiny, plain and the amenities were simple. All that changed in Bud's career span. Bud was part of a generation of campground entrepreneurs who saw that camping could be so much more. He embraced the industry's changes to provide more amenities such as artificial ponds with water toys, welcoming much larger trailers and motorhomes. He was one of the inventors of camping cabins, not only designing but figuring out how to manufacture them. He repeatedly showed the world what was possible. Of course, he is not the only person who was creative and entrepreneurial. Far from it. But he was always at the head of the line.

If we learn from what Bud showed us, it is that we should never be content to be doing what we have been doing. We should always be looking for ways that

meet the needs of new generations of people coming onto the stage. The one word Bud never used was "impossible."

COMPASSION.

Bud was a realistic, hard-working, nuts-and-bolts capitalist. He wanted to make money. He expected the people he hired to work hard. But his goal of making money was never the only thing he was about. He wanted not only to make money, but to create new ways of serving people. He wanted to create jobs and help people. In the 15 years I knew Bud, I worked with him on several deals where he sold campgrounds that he had purchased and upgraded to people getting started in the business who could never have afforded the investment on their own. He provided financing, guidance, inspiration, and mentoring.

Bud never hid an idea from the world. He was always eager to share his knowledge and experience as widely as possible. He was always in attendance at WACO meetings, ARVC conventions, and served on boards, while also meeting with elected officials. He did that for more than his own interests. He wanted every campground to reflect well on the industry. And he had a deep-seated desire to help people improve themselves as he had done -- through hard work.

There is an old saying that "if you give someone a fish, you feed them for a day, but if you teach them how to fish, you feed them for life." Bud most definitely taught people how to fish. In fact, he taught people how to build fishing poles, bait and tackle, docks, and marinas. He just never stopped.

Bud was taken from us far too early. It is a genuine tragedy that his health deteriorated relatively early in his senior years. I wish we still had him with us. We will miss his sense of humor, his unpretentious manner, and his love for others. He probably never would have said it out loud, but it was so clear that he loved us all.

Bud, we love you. We will miss you.



Don't forget to send us your favorite memories and pictures of Bud for the upcoming Convention!

WHY IT'S CRUCIAL TO USE ADEQUATELY INSURED THIRD-PARTY CONTRACTORS IN COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS



In today's fast-paced commercial campground environment, outsourcing to third-party contractors is often essential for maintaining efficiency and expertise. From construction and maintenance to IT and janitorial services, contractors help businesses stay agile. However, hiring a third-party contractor who is not adequately insured can expose your business to significant financial and legal risks.

1. Risk Transfer: Protecting Your Business Assets

One of the primary goals of commercial insurance is risk management. When you hire an adequately insured contractor, you are ensuring that they carry their own liability coverage, workers' compensation, and any applicable specialty policies. This means that if something goes wrong—an injury, property damage, or a professional error—the contractor's insurance is the first line of financial responsibility, not yours.

If a contractor is uninsured or underinsured, your company could become liable for these risks, leading to out-of-pocket expenses or claims against your own insurance policy, which could raise your premiums or even result in policy non-renewal.



2. Workers' Compensation: Avoid Costly Employee Misclassification

If an uninsured contractor gets injured on the job and does not carry workers' compensation coverage, they may attempt to file a claim against your policy, arguing that they were essentially working as your employee. This could trigger a potential increase in your workers' compensation premiums or even penalties.

It's recommended you always require proof of active workers' compensation insurance to safeguard your business from these avoidable claims.



3. General Liability: Safeguarding Against Property Damage and Bodily Injury

General liability insurance protects against property damage or bodily injury caused by a contractor's actions. Imagine a contractor damages your building, or a visitor trips over their equipment. If the contractor is uninsured, your business could be held financially responsible for medical costs, repairs, or lawsuits.

Ensuring that all contractors carry general liability insurance helps insulate your business from these types of exposures.

4. Professional Liability: Protecting Against Negligence and Errors

For contractors offering professional services (such as consulting, IT, or engineering), professional liability insurance (also known as Errors & Omissions insurance) is critical. Without it, mistakes in judgment or design that lead to financial harm could result in

costly lawsuits—with your business potentially named as a co-defendant.

Requesting proof of professional liability coverage ensures that the contractor—not your company—is responsible for defending and resolving such claims.

5. **Contractual Compliance and Peace of Mind**

Most commercial insurance policies contain language requiring that subcontractors or third parties meet minimum insurance standards. If your business knowingly engages uninsured contractors, you may be breaching these policy terms—potentially voiding coverage if a claim arises.

Requiring certificates of insurance (COIs) before work begins and routinely verifying policy status adds a critical layer of due diligence and ensures you stay compliant with your own insurer's expectations.


Conclusion: A Smart Risk Management Practice

Using adequately insured third-party contractors isn't just a best practice—it's a core principle of sound risk management. It protects your business, helps control insurance costs, ensures contractual compliance, and reduces your exposure to potentially devastating claims.


Before signing a contract or allowing work to begin, always request and verify a current certificate of insurance. It's a small step that could prevent major headaches.

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WACO Web Stats & Social Media Trends



Top Posts in April 2025

Facebook/Instagram Insights - April

FB Lifetime Followers: 10,319 (-11 from March)

IG Lifetime Followers: 617 (+2 from March)

Last 90 Days (April) FB

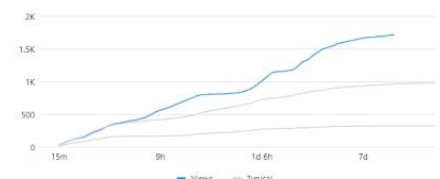


Overview

Views 1,721 Reach 1,335 Interactions 17 Link clicks 11

This post received more views compared to your recent Facebook posts.

Views 1,721



This post received more interactions compared to your recent Facebook posts.

Interactions 17

Reactions 12 Comments 2 Shares 3 Saves 0

April '25 IG

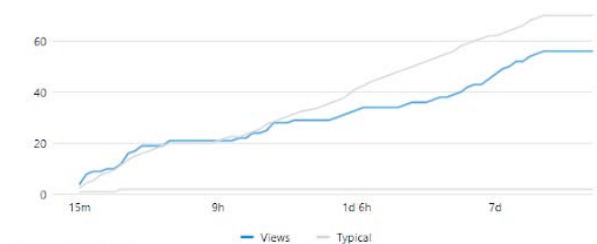


Overview

Views 56 Reach 53 Interactions 3

This post received more views compared to your recent Instagram posts.

Views 56



Followers breakdown

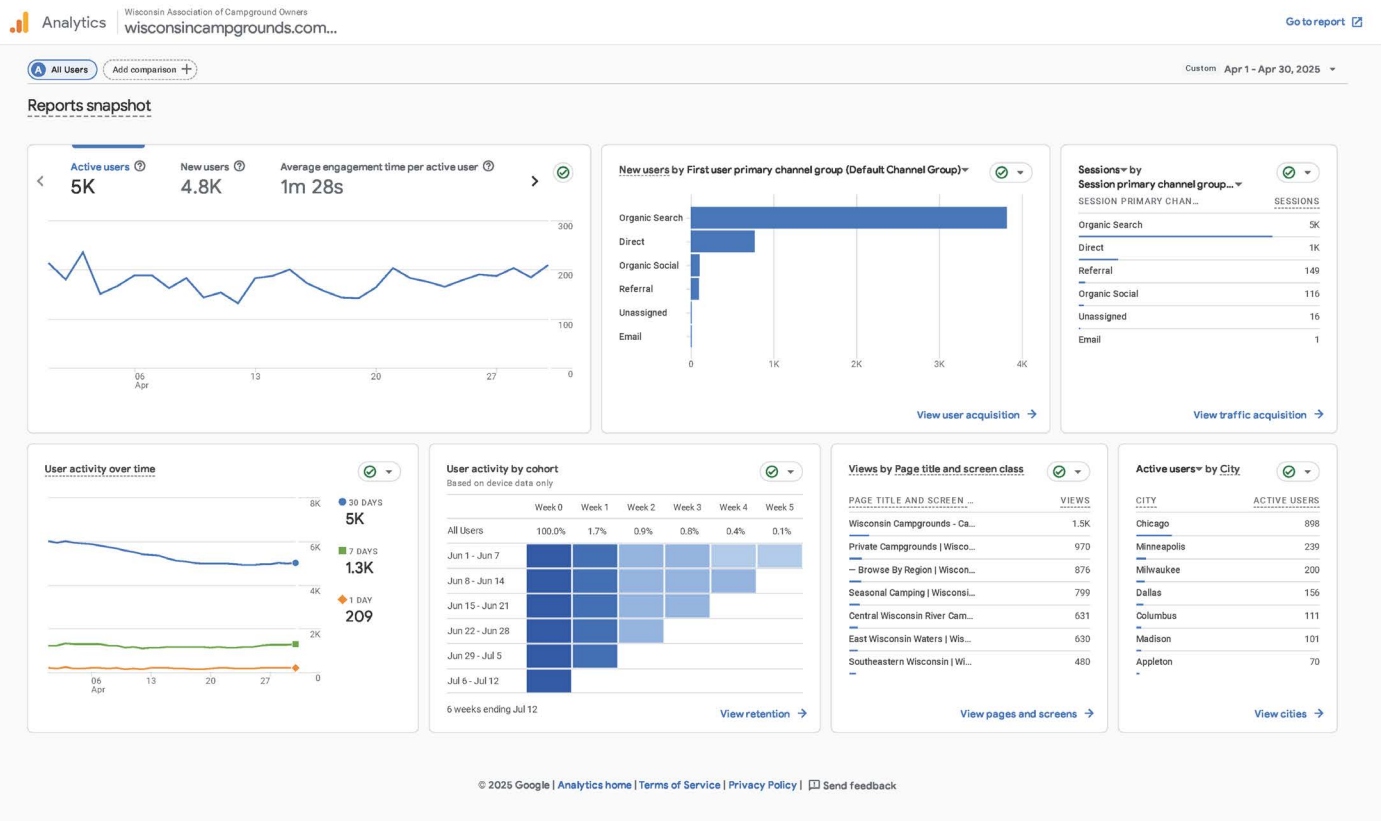


WACO Web Stats & Social Media Trends



April 2025

WEB MONTHLY SNAPSHOT



WACO Web Stats & Social Media Trends



Top Posts in May 2025

Facebook/Instagram Insights - May

FB Lifetime Followers: 10,324 (+5 from April)

IG Lifetime Followers: 619 (+2 from April)

Last 90 Days (May) FB

Wisconsin Campers
May 7 at 8:00 PM · 🌐

PS - Mother's Day is just FOUR DAYS away! We have your last minute gift covered! 🎁 Give Mom a gift she'll actually use—peace, quiet, and a cozy cabin! WACO camping gift certificates are perfect for Mother's Day and redeemable at any of our 240+ campgrounds statewide.
Grab one now: www.WisconsinCampgrounds.com
#MothersDay #CampingGifts

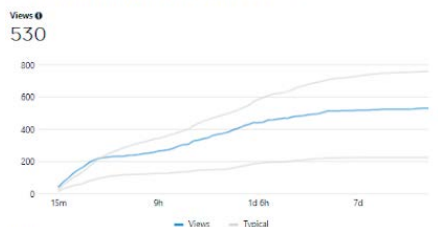


 **MOTHER'S DAY GIFT CERTIFICATES!**

Overview

Views 530 Reach 398 Interactions 3 Link clicks 0

📈 This post received more views compared to your recent Facebook posts.



📈 This post's interactions are typical compared to your recent Facebook posts.

Interactions 3
Reactions 1 Comments 1 Shares 1 Saves 0

May '25 IG



SITES ARE FILLING FAST! 

wicampgrounds · Follow

wicampgrounds 2w
The weather's heating up and campers are hitting the road! 🌞 Don't wait to book your favorite spot.
Plan ahead at: WisconsinCampgrounds.com

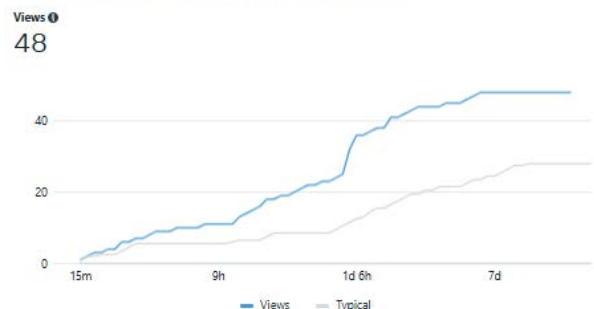
📍 **spun of the moment ranch** 2w
Spur of the Moment Ranch, Mountain WI, still has availability for the 2025 season! Direct access to ATV/UTV trails, horse trails, and more!
Like · Reply

4 likes · May 14
[Log in to like or comment.](#)

Overview

Views 48 Reach 41 Interactions 5

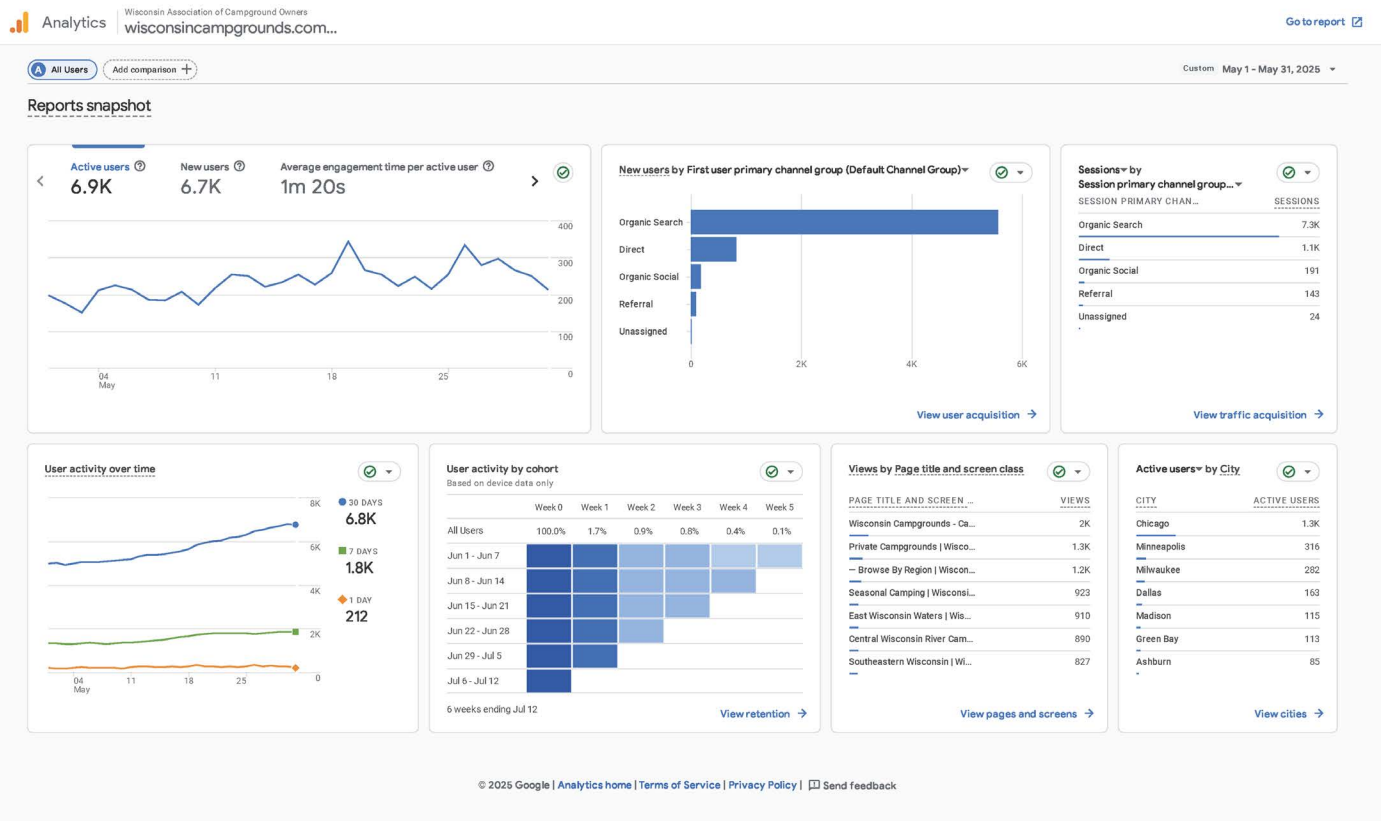
📈 This post received more views compared to your recent Instagram posts.



WACO Web Stats & Social Media Trends



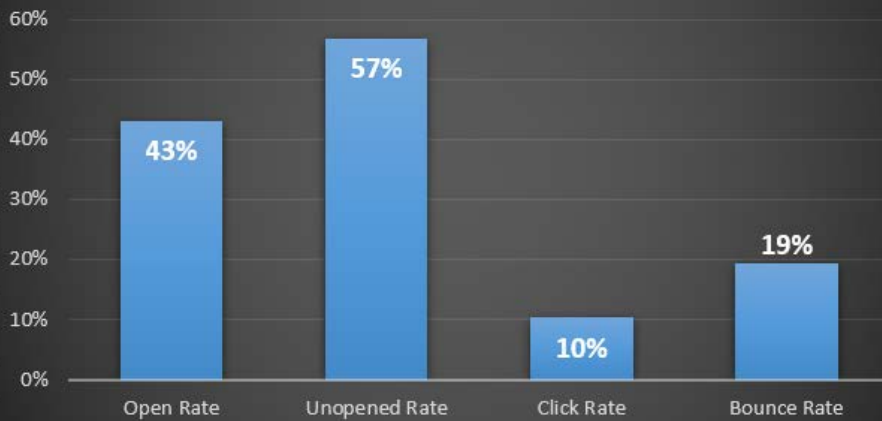
May 2025 WEB MONTHLY SNAPSHOT



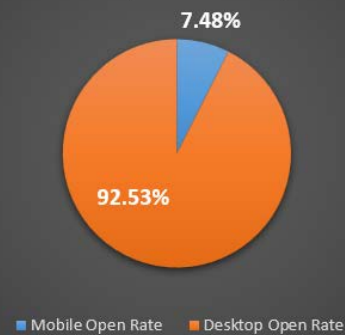
WACO WEB



5,652 Total Sends in April 2025

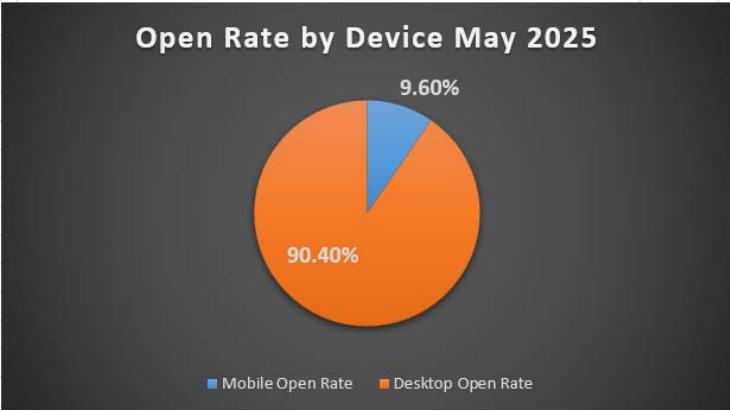
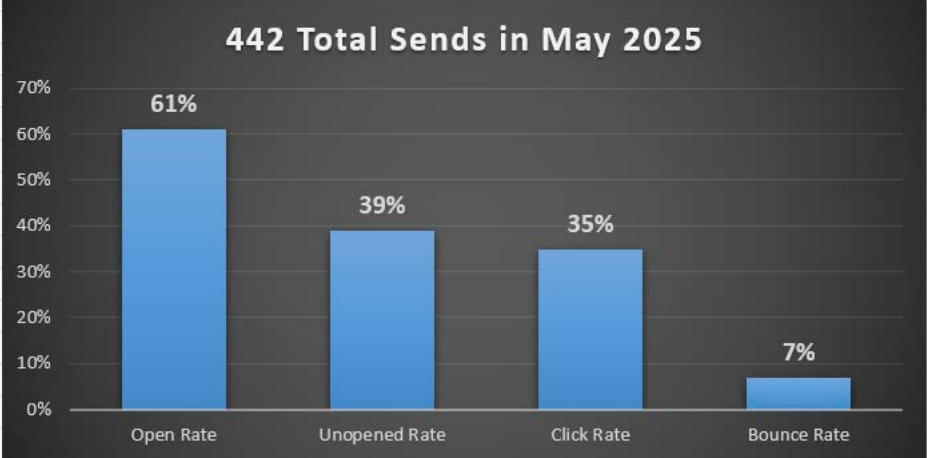
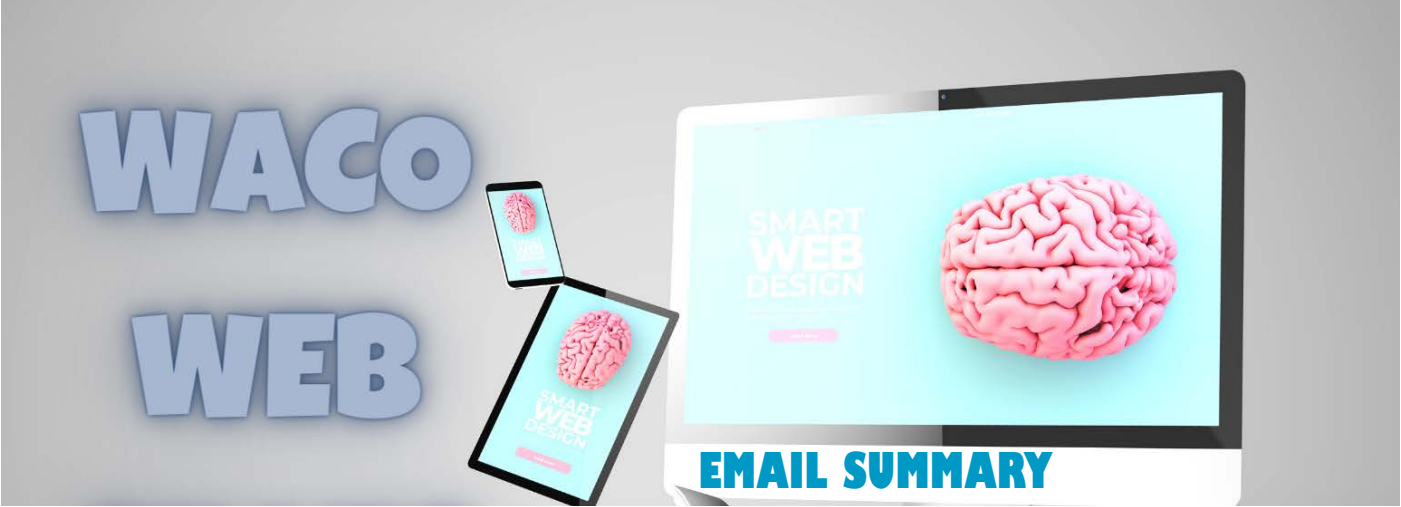


Open Rate by Device April 2025



Top Emails by Open Rate for April 2025

Campaign Name	Sends	Opens	Open Rate	Mobile Open Rate	Desktop Open Rate	Clicks	Click Rate
WACO Convention 2025 - Vendor Survey	141	103	77.40%	3.20%	96.80%	62	46.60%
WACO Convention 2025 - Campground Survey	137	100	75.80%	6.20%	93.80%	31	23.50%
WACO Members - New at convention in 2025! Part 2	258	185	75.80%	14.00%	86.00%	73	29.90%
Amusement Ride Registration & Renewal Reminder	236	156	70.00%	8.20%	91.80%	13	5.80%
March 2025 WACO Newsletter	237	150	66.70%	9.70%	90.30%	46	20.40%



Top Emails by Open Rate for May 2025

Campaign Name	Sends	Opens	Open Rate	Mobile Open Rate	Desktop Open Rate	Clicks	Click Rate
April 2025 WACO Newsletter	442	270	65.50%	9.60%	90.40%	94	22.80%

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

We mailed out physical copies of your renewal paperwork back in June, but wanted to send you a quick reminder as the early bird deadline is quickly approaching! EARLY BIRD ENDS 7/31/25!

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO COMPLETING YOUR RENEWALS AND REGISTRATIONS FOR 2026:

MOST IMPORTANT! - STEP ONE: Membership Renewal - Please check over the individual listing information we sent you in your physical mailing. If you don't have it, please reply here and we can email it to you. Please check this over and make any necessary changes. If you removed/added amenities or recreation, are adding new sites or rentals, etc. - or if you are doing these things in the offseason, be sure to update them now. Remember: What is listed here is what we use for your website listing AND printed in the 2026 campground directory. We can update your online listing anytime, but the printed directory listing for the upcoming year can only be changed once!

**CLICK HERE TO UPDATE YOUR LISTING
AND PAY ONLINE!**

STEP TWO: Advertising with WACO - Click below to see your exclusive advertising options as a WACO member. There are directory/online ads, brochure distribution, and more options! Remember: Your ads in the directory make your park stand out as campers flip through to plan their summer adventures, but they also help us keep this a FREE guide for campers! Our print advertising options can help you save money - there's power in group buying! The more parks that participate, the lower the price goes for everyone! With our brochure distribution program, you can save time and money by having our office distribute your materials at ten of the biggest camping and RV shows throughout WI, MN, and IL! Please download the form linked at the button here and mail/email it back to the WACO office.

**CLICK HERE TO PRINT YOUR
ADVERTISING FORM/SEND IT IN!**

STEP THREE: 2025 Fall Tours/Workshop Registration - Click below to register for the upcoming Fall Tours/Workshops. You and your employees can join us for just one or both! Remember: This is a great time to network with fellow owners while all the successes/struggles of the season are fresh in your mind!

**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR FALL
WORKSHOPS**

STEP FOUR: 2026 WACO Convention & Trade Show - Click below to register for the 63rd Annual Convention & Trade Show. Be sure to complete this before the early bird deadline (1/31/26) to save money! Also - don't forget to book your hotel rooms as they always sell out, and boy, do they sell out FAST! *The event dates are March 11-15, 2026.*

**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR
CONVENTION**



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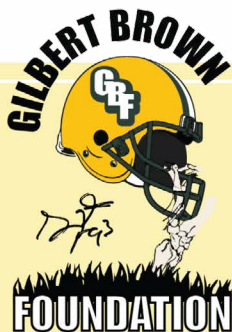
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MEMBER UPDATES

GBF Member Donations 2025



TOTALS AS OF

6/28/25



Campground	Total Funds Raised
Duck Creek	\$33,065
Grand Valley Campground	\$4,998
Emrick Lake Campground & Resort	\$4,940
Pineland Camping Park	\$4,650
Backyard Campground	\$2,400
River's Edge Campground (Birchwood)	\$1,860
Lakeside Fire Campground	\$1,500
Indian Trails Campground	\$850
Maple View Campground	\$767
Hixton/Alma Center KOA Holiday	\$650
Huckleberry Acres	\$650
River Bend RV Resort	\$650
Lake Arrowhead	\$500
Snug Harbor	\$500
Buffalo Lake Camping Resort	\$295
Sleepy Dragon Campground	\$200
Wilderness Campground	\$180
TOTAL FUNDS RAISED	\$58,655



DON'T FORGET!

In 2025, if you need to use the GBF raffle license, be sure to complete the JotForm below and Carla or Lori will connect with you on next steps! They will also follow up with the appropriate documentation to keep you out of jail if its determined that you are able to utilize the Raffle License!



BOARD of DIRECTORS

This dedicated group of members spend time and energy making decisions for your Association. If you have ideas, questions, or want to get more involved, reach out to one of them or the WACO office.



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JOSEPH LEDGER

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