



## THE CHAT 'N CHEW AT ECHO STAFF CAMP

Let's introduce any new staff to one of the Jamboree's gems – the Staff Camp snack bar. To those who have served previously Jamborees, both at the Summit and at Fort AP Hill, this institution is more commonly known as the Chat 'n Chew. It's impossible to encapsulate in a paragraph, let alone even easy in a page or two, what this place does for the morale and camaraderie of the adult volunteer staff.



When staff arrive at the Jamboree by bus to Base camp Echo all will notice some clear landmarks – the staff dining hall (a tent seemingly large enough to cover a football field), lots of staff sleeping tents, a few bathhouses (which are the only *real* buildings in town), another tent area (sure it has a red cross and if you can please stay away from being a customer of theirs), and then there is the Chat 'n Chew. The only way to describe it is thus: it's an anomaly from the bit of drab tentage I just listed

above. As I paint the picture in your mind, use all your senses to envision a lively bit of music playing in the background, flags waving in the breeze, the smells of freshly grilled hamburgers cooking and even a fountain feature that is more than just a wishing well but a place where you can go to quiet yourself, along with a cold drink and a pint of Ben & Jerry's, just because you can (after all you've met your BMI requirement since you are here). With that tease, let me share some of the plans for this venue in a more detailed rather than imaginative fashion.



Underlying the festive exterior, the Chat 'n Chew at its core is one of several retail food snack bars operated by the Jamboree Food Team. The principal retail food tent resembles a food-court, Scout camp style. As you enter you'll quickly realize you are able to select from any of several food choices like pizzas, subs, burgers, chicken tenders, and a revolving array of other traditional and dressed up "snack bar fare". You will also have your pick of fresh brewed ice tea (with sugar like it should be), the full array of Coke and Pepsi products among a variety of other cold beverages, traditional hot and cold snack selections from fries to candy bars, chips to ice cream novelties, good for you energy bars to even better for energy, some may say, Starbucks® coffee.

The Chat 'n Chew hours of operation are extensive. Coffee bar service starts at 6:00am with selective chef's choice food options until 11:00 am when their full menu is available. This full service



runs until 9:00pm when they begin evening ramp down. A chef's choice will be available until closing at 10:00pm. If you wonder when the Chat 'n Chew sleeps, well let's say it never really does. Its leadership is savvy enough to know that though they close the retail food sales portion and turn down the music



about ten o'clock, once the lights are turned on inside the tents they stay on for the duration of the Jamboree. It's a midnight Mecca of its own sort and if you are thinking about asking why the lights, consult your local venturing leader ☺.

Let me next lay out some of the staff quality of life aspects that the Chat 'n Chew brings to bear in conjunction with your snacking pleasure. I ask you to again picture this, as you wonder out of their retail food-court with your goodie of choice in hand (trying to figure a place to land so to speak) you will find a variety of seating options. There are

modest sized tents (40'x40') with picnic tables (tables similar to the dining hall but that's where that similarity ends) and decorations the Chat 'n Chew leadership has provided to make you feel at home. Such differences from the staff dining hall also include the fact that overhead you will find a fan gently circulates and to your surprise you see along the edge of the walls each table has power to recharge yourself. Recharge self is an apt term, for if you can't connect when you need to then there is a crisis. So while you and your friends enjoy the food and snacks from the Chat 'n Chew, you notice others doing the same while they have their phones or computers plugged in and either are posting pictures of their Jamboree day or for those who must be catching up with their work at home. Occasional work while away at the Jamboree is a reality of volunteering for more than a few and embracing it, rather than making it impractical, is one of the true visions of the Chat 'n Chew. Now while some toil away, others gaze overhead at the circus of flags, the Christmas lights and even at a random flamingo. Some staffers



tune in to the projector screen that has a news station on, catching a glimpse of the real world back home with the remote that was just waiting for them on the adjacent table. Now know there is no Long Island ice tea served, just instead the soporific effects of the good fare and good times here are often felt. A touch of home it is, in the grandeur of the Summit's Jamboree.

Of real importance to share is a bit about the staff of the Chat 'n Chew. This venue is run completely by BSA staff volunteers, folks paying to play just like the rest of us. There are no hired food purveyor employees working here, though the food contractor is involved in making sure the Chat 'n Chew has its planned stock of products and quality food



to prepare for you. The rest is done by those dedicated Scouters whose passion is to make the staff experience for Scouting compatriots at the Jamboree special.

That said, 'special' is a good word to segue into the restaurant aspect of the Chat 'n Chew. Yes, I said restaurant. Why, you may ask, would we need that when we have our magnificent staff dining hall? Well for some the staff dining hall may not be the dinner spot of choice on a given special night when you



have the chance to go to out for a memorable meal with the taste of home cooked food and the feel of real service. The Chat 'n Chew limits its patrons of these dinners, takes reservations via tickets sold for these evening extravaganzas and will make you a meal to boast to your family about, again right in the middle of the Jamboree! For those who didn't experience this last time, let me expound with some of their restaurant details. Every night, once the Jamboree gets going, the Chat 'n Chew will host their special dinner service from 6:00pm to 8:00pm via reserved ticket sales that closed the day before

(so they can order precisely the right amount of food to feed everyone without waste). The menu rotates and includes a different premium food choice each night. Whether it's a real BBQ dinner, or Rib eye steak and potatoes, or the truly popular low country boil, you are in for a treat with your golden ticket purchase.

Applying the usual parallelism of plucking the last word as my entrance to the next concept, 'purchase' is a good word to segue into another important topic worth sharing with everyone so you may understand how the Food Team is able to

offer the Chat 'n Chew experience. The Chat 'n Chew is run as a retail food center, not a cost center as are most of the other food aspects of the Jamboree. Simply put, that means the Jamboree doesn't just pay for the Chat 'n Chew food and then just provide this food to staff – as it does at the Staff Dining hall. Rather, the Chat 'n Chew crafts all the creative food and then sells it for a small profit to help offset the fixed expenses of the whole setup. So take the special dinners and



you will find the ticket costs vary based on our cost of the meal being served, because we are mindful that we have to cover the outlay for the steak or the low country boil items, but we aren't out to take our volunteers to the cleaners to cross subsidize anything else. We aim to keep things affordable for staff who are paying dearly to be here at the Jamboree to work, but know that some will wish to pay a little more for a touch of class in the midst of camp and your green makes it possible for our Chat 'n Chew



Crew to do their thing. So as you shop know that you are treating yourself to a touch of home style fare while at the same time supporting a venue where you get people who care to deliver a truly special experience to all the staff.

In closing we would like to share that the goal at this retreat in Echo is to help improve your Jamboree staff experience in some way, so in turn you can help deliver a great Jamboree for our youth. We saw, particularly as the last Jamboree wore on, how the Chat 'n Chew served as a gathering place for so many staff. Many just talking or playing cards, while others were setting a world record for running back and forth for more goodies that were hot off the grill. The Jamboree band graced with its presence, and towards the end of our last time at the Summit we saw many a department manager lead thank-you meetings at one of the Chat 'n Chew reserved tents. Our plan is to enable all this to recur while also watching out for whether we need to bring something new to test things for the 2019 Jamboree, for that is one good way to plan well for the evolving world that will grace the Summit's doorsteps in just a few years. The Chat 'n Chew at its heart is a team of our best Scouters serving all Scouters and we are looking forward to seeing you there for a touch of Jamboree staff sabbatical!

