

August 13, 2017

Greetings, Parents & Student Back-Packers -

Our annual backpacking trips are just around the corner. As essential – and ‘required’ – parts of the ALCS curriculum, these trips consistently rank at the top of students’ list when it comes to their scholastic experience. Safety is our top priority, with all participants required to under-go extensive training & preparation. Second, as a school priority, is creating the opportunity for students to push their ‘comfort’ zones and find strength from within that they may not have known they had. Finally, last but not least, our third priority -- as mandated by the ALCS Charter -- is tapping into wilderness as an integrating context for (a) building a stronger school community, and (b) learning vital concepts of ‘people care, earth care & fair share,’ with all of the multi-curricular content made possible by this matrix of plants, animals & human life. Although not all details of the trips are final yet, this letter provides as much information as possible, as soon as possible, in order to help you and your student(s) prepare for an adventure into the unknown and into our selves.

### **Trip Dates:**

- 9<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> Grade: Depart on Monday Sept. 11th and return on Thursday Sept. 14th
- 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> Grade: Depart on Monday Sept 25th and return on Thursday Sept 28th

Students need to be at school by 8:00 a.m. on the date of departure. Both groups will return to the school around 3:30 pm on Thursday. Call the school before you pick up your child, as (i) the exact arrival times are subject to change, and (ii) students are expected to help unload gear, return gear & clean the bus when we return.

On the Friday morning before departure, all students should bring their backpacks to school filled with everything they are taking on their trip. This is very important for the safety and comfort of your student as well as the other members of his or her group. **Students will meet with their group leaders from 8:30 to 10:00 on these days: Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> for 9<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>, and Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup> for 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>.** These meetings are mandatory. In other words, (a) your students’ grade will drop if they do not attend, and (b) they may not be allowed to go on the trip **or** may be shifted to another group for reasons of safety or trustworthiness.

**Back-Up trip Dates:** If we need to postpone a trip for any reason, we have established back-up dates. For the 9<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> grade trip, the back-up dates are September 18th – 21st. For the 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> grade trip, the back-up dates are October 2nd – 5th.

**Trails:** School staff and local wilderness experts are finalizing which trails we will use. Once these routes have been decided, we will publicize this information. Trail maps will be posted at school so that you can get a good look at the trails we’ll take. Trail and group assignments will be posted for student viewing on **Wed Aug. 30<sup>th</sup>**. Student council will be consulted for group assignments.

## **Food, Money and Packing:**

*Food:* Please provide a sack lunch for your student to eat on the Monday that her / his trip departs. Lunch will be eaten on the way to the trailhead, before we begin hiking. We will provide the other meals during the trip, as well as trail snacks. Students need to let their advisor know of any food allergies as soon as possible, so we can accommodate accordingly.

*Money:* Food is purchased with the \$45 trip fee we ask each student to pay (please pay at the office). Note that families qualifying for free and reduced price lunches are eligible to receive subsidies of up to half the cost of school trips. Be sure to complete and turn in a subsidy request form at least a week prior to the departure date if this option is of interest to you.

*Packing:* You are welcome to send additional snacks with your student, but please keep in mind that (a) light packs are much better than heavy ones – so, any snacks you send with your student should be compact and lightweight (eg. jerky, power bars) – and (b) all food from student packs must go into the bear bag each night. Your student will be asked to carry some of the group food as well as first aid and cooking equipment that the school will provide. We try to share the weight of these things evenly among all members of the trail team.

## **Clothing & Equipment**

*Clothing:* To help students prepare, a packing list is enclosed along with a list of equipment retailers, in case you do not own all of the suggested items already. During ‘Backpack Base Camp’ (the week of Aug. 14<sup>th</sup>), backpacking leaders display the types of clothing and equipment that are necessary for a comfortable and successful backpack trip so that you can properly equip your student.

“Cotton kills,” is a slogan that describes what can happen if jeans & other types of cotton clothing get wet & core body temperatures drop. While overstated & melodramatic, this phrase tells people to bring multiple layers of light-weight non-cotton clothing into the back-country. ALCS understands that clothing is expensive, so we have non-cotton clothing here at the school to loan out on an ‘as-needed’ basis much as one can check out a library book. Thrift-stores are also an option.

*Equipment:* The expense of acquiring backpacks, sleeping bags and tents can be significant, so we have an inventory of backpacks, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, and tents that students may borrow. Students must file a request with their advisor to check out school equipment. Students borrowing equipment will pick up the equipment between 8:15 and 8:45, before the pre-trip meeting on Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> for 9<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> and Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup> for 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>. They are responsible for what they borrow and must pay for it if they damage or lose it. For this reason, students need to leave collateral for the equipment. A \$50.00 check from you (made out to the school), which we will not cash and will tear up when they return the intact equipment, will work. If they do not bring a check, they will have to leave a cell phone or something else of value.

**Optional Parent Meetings:** We will hold an optional meeting between 5:00 and 6:00 on Wednesday Aug 30 for any parents (or others) who have questions or comments about the trips. This meeting will be at the school in the front lobby or in Pete’s classroom.

**Medical:** Please ensure that all medical information is current prior to the trip with a couple days to spare. Each medical form will be reviewed by Jim McIntosh, who is a Registered Nurse. Inform the

school of any health concerns and food issues regarding your student so that we can make their group leaders aware of those concerns. ([jmcintosh@aldocs.org](mailto:jmcintosh@aldocs.org) or [prankin@aldocs.org](mailto:prankin@aldocs.org) )

**Other:** Prepare your student for the fact that THEY should be prepared for all types of weather & daily challenges. The packing list is crucial for your student's comfort & safety. Regular cardio & core body exercise in the weeks leading up to the trip will help to provide your student with a stronger platform for learning & enjoyment on this trip. So, exercise, hike, bike, swim, dance or run to prepare for the journey.

If you have questions, please don't hesitate to call us. You may contact Pete Rankin or Jim McIntosh at any time (575-538-2547) or at [prankin@aldocs.org](mailto:prankin@aldocs.org) and [jmcintosh@aldocs.org](mailto:jmcintosh@aldocs.org).

*Remember that wilderness experience is challenging, fun & exceptional as a life-time teacher.*

All the Best,

Pete Rankin - Social Studies, Experiential Education & Back-Pack Coordinator

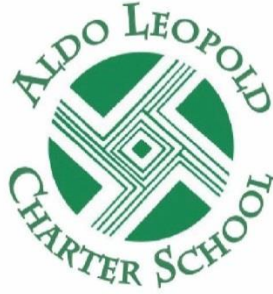
Jim McIntosh – Math, Registered Nurse & Risk Management

Wayne Sherwood - Director

Aldo Leopold Charter School

**School Mission—**

*Aldo Leopold Charter School provides an engaging and challenging educational program emphasizing direct experience, inquiry learning, stimulation of the creative process, and stewardship of our community and natural environment.*



## Packing List for Wilderness Backpacking

*Items with an asterisk (\*) beside them are available on loan from the school. "Loaners" require that students offer collateral as a guarantee that items are returned in good condition.*

- Back pack\*
- 2-person tent\* (larger tents are fun—but they are heavier!)
- Sleeping bag\* (should be rated 20 degrees or lower)
- Sleeping pad\* (more important than you might think)
- Cap with a brim
- Rain poncho *or* raincoat and pants
- 2 sturdy water bottles or Camelbak-style hydration system
- Headlamp or flashlight
- Sturdy hiking shoes
- Sandals for camp
- 2 pair of socks; cotton is not recommended
- Compact jacket; cotton is not recommended
- Warm cap (even for summer trips); cotton is not recommended
- 1 long-sleeved shirts; cotton is not recommended
- 2 short-sleeved shirts; cotton is not recommended
- 1 pair of pants; long pants that convert into shorts are ideal; cotton is not recommended
- Mess kit (sturdy bowl, cup, spoon, fork)
- Trash bag
- Hand towel and washcloth
- Bandana
- School-issued journal with extra pen & pencil
- Pocket knife with a 3-inch (or shorter) blade (optional)
- Lighter (optional)

In addition, students should bring toiletries in a sealable plastic bag: sunscreen, lip balm, biodegradable soap, comb, toothpaste, toothbrush, deodorant, &, if appropriate, feminine hygiene items.

Prescription medications will, in most cases, be packed in by an ALCS staff member. Students who will require prescription medication for the trip should contact Jim McIntosh, RN, at ALCS to briefly review medication administration. Any student who uses an inhaler should bring 2 inhalers on the trip; any student with diabetes medication & supplies should bring a duplicate set of supplies (glucometer, strips, glucagon, &c).

Thanks for being wilderness aware!