

Dear campers and family,

My name is Joe Samek and I will be leading this year's Safari 5 Camp along with my wife Julie. I joined the Air Force in 2002 and had the opportunity to serve in various assignments across the country. Julie and I, who both grew up in the Midwest, chose to settle down in Ohio and start a family farm at the end of my military career. In addition to farming, we are both aerospace engineers working in the defense industry. We are happy to call Ohio home and raise our two boys here. Most importantly, our family was blessed to find our home church in Xenia, Ohio where we are actively involved with North Side Christian Church.

Our theme for this year's Safari is "Don't just survive - Thrive!" Julie and I have both flown as aircrew members aboard military aircraft for Uncle Sam in the past, and one of the prerequisites for doing so was survival training. We plan to make the most of those taxpayer dollars and pass on some of that knowledge we learned. But don't worry, campers won't be eating bugs or sleeping in a pile of leaves, we plan to keep things a little more civilized! Who's ready to sleep in a tree house!?!

We have a fun packed week planned out this year. Each day will involve a unique adventure that will challenge the campers to build their confidence, their teamwork with fellow campers, and most importantly their faith and relationship with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. We will be weaving some of those survival skills into the lesson plan throughout the week, and emphasizing how our faith enables us to thrive.

The Butler Springs website has a [general packing list](#) you can refer to. In addition to the normal guidelines, Safari campers should plan to be outdoors almost the entire week, rain or shine. Bring a backpack that's comfortable to wear while hiking, and can also carry water and other essentials throughout the day. Sunscreen and bug spray are both must haves. A hat and/or sunglasses wouldn't be a bad idea, just don't bring anything that is too expensive to risk getting lost or broken. Clothes are going to get dirty, so pack accordingly. Bring shoes that are comfortable to hike in, as well as a separate pair of water shoes or hiking sandals that can get wet while we're exploring the creek or rafting down the river. Pro-tip from somebody who spent years wearing combat boots: bring extra socks! Your feet will thank you when put on a dry pair right before a hike. We will be swimming almost daily, so bring along appropriate swim attire. Since we'll be away from the main camp, there is no electricity. Aside from the moon, the only light we'll have at night is the one you bring. That means a flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries. And of course, please bring your Bible.

If you have any specific questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. We do plan to take lots of pictures, so if parents would like to see them once we're back on the grid after camp, shoot us an email so we know how to reach you.

God Bless,

Joe Samek  
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