

Pennsic Preparedness

By Dame Aoife Finn of Ynos Mon

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Greetings everyone. This missive is for the use of Kids and Parents who are attending Pennsic or other large events or wars. Please forward it where you feel it will find the correct audiences.

At the time for Pennsic draws nearer, I am reminded of the many times last Pennsic when it a child was found lost, a child was unable to tell how to get help, or the Children's Point staff was unable to get enough information from a child to be able to locate and speak to their parent. You'd be surprised at how many older children aren't able to verbalize the basic details of finding their way back to their own camps, or what their parent's SCA names are and the group they are camping with. Many children are unaware of the basic rules of Pennsic concerning children, as well.

Parents, please take the time to drill your children on the name of your group, the names of adults who may help them if Mom or Dad aren't to be found (and those that may NOT help them, if applicable), the location of your camp including a street name, Mom and Dad's SCA names, the block number you are camping in, etc... You can make a game of this, rewarding the children when they get the correct answers. If you think your child will be unable to remember all this information, help them make and decorate a belt favor. On the BACK of this favor, print the child's name and all other pertinent information. This is always handy if your little one gets lost in the merchant area. If your child is very young but quite mobile, pin the favor to the back of their garb every time they go out. They'll never see it, but it will be there for easy reference, saving your child the valuable time it takes to search the Pennsic Database in case they are separated from you and there is an emergency.

Be sure to let your children know the rules as posted in the Pennsic booklet regarding curfew, appropriate ages for babysitters, appropriate ages for being able to go out without an adult, etc.... And please understand that just because your child meets or exceeds the listed rules and ages, does not mean they are prepared to be loosed on the Pennsic populace unaided. Please use your own best judgment in allowing your "over age 8" children out alone.

Be sure to take your child on a tour of Pennsic, hitting especially the "administration" blocks which host the Chirurgeons, Security, etc.... Be sure they can recognize a security baldric or tabard, know where information point is located, and know where Children's point is located. It's also handy for them to know where the Cooper checkpoints are and how to recognize a Cooper staffperson. They can always get help at these places when they are in need. Give them a copy of the map in the Pennsic booklet, and mark the place you camp in, and places the kids will want to visit frequently. Give them specific rules about where they may not go. Some of the Pennsic areas are unsuitable for children.

Does your child know how to ride the bus and how to find bus stops? How to ride the haywagon and how to find the stops? How to safely get on and off the haywagon? How to read that map in the Pennsic booklet?

If you are going out of camp, and are leaving your child in the care of someone else, be sure to leave a list of places you will be and how to contact you. Though they are not terribly medieval, many parents find hand-held walkie talkies to be a great way to keep in touch. If you use one, be sure to label it with your child's name. Each Pennsic we get an increasing pile of them at children's point, left in the safety of the tent while the children play on the playground. It would be nice to tell the kids which one was speaking the voice of a frantic Mom and what the child's name was so we could call them in from playing.

In addition, a great many children use their walkie-talkies to play games and tricks on the channels, which leave those channels unusable to people who are trying to use them to communicate. Many children end up stranded at children's point because their parent was unable to get through on the agreed-upon channel to give them an update, due to other children monopolizing the channel with nonsense, noise, repeated and excessive clicks, etc..... (some of this comes from off-site). Other children get on the channel and ask for Mom, and expect the right Mom to answer. There are easily 20 Moms on any given channel at Pennsic. Many children do not understand that some frequencies/channels are reserved for staff use. Please cover the basics of walkie-talkie etiquette before you use one at Pennsic, and make sure your child is capable of using one responsibly before Pennsic begins.

Be sure to cover the topics of proper hydration and sun block with your kids. They succumb to heat and dehydration much more quickly than adults. Also cover the topic of sanitation, and the need to wash their hands frequently.

Thanks for your attention, let's make this a safe and happy Pennsic for all the children who attend.