

# Summer <sup>2014</sup> Camps

Education & Activities



Alexandria  
**Gazette Packet**



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## Choosing a Summer Camp

Professionals offer advice on selecting a camp, but now is the time to register.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

Many families with school age children will plan to have their children spend some of the much-anticipated summer season in camp. If you haven't yet selected camps for your children, now is the time.

"Popular classes and programs always fill early," said Kevin Rechen, camp director of Summer at Norwood in Potomac, Md.. "Families that are choosing a camp based on a specific program or class should register as soon as they can."

Whether you choose a traditional day camp, a specialty camp or a sleep away camp, the Washington, D.C. region has a multitude of offerings. The array of options can be overwhelming for some parents, but summer camps can be an important part of a child's development. Local child development experts say there are a few things to keep in mind when choosing for a camp.

"Summer camp is an opportunity for children to develop social skills with their peers," said Linda Guly, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Marymount University in Arlington, Va. "Camps give the benefits of social interaction in a more relaxed setting."

When selecting a camp, there are factors that parents should keep in mind. "When parents are looking for a camp they should try to find a camp where they're comfortable with the facility, the programming and counselors and staff," said Rechen.

An array of specialty camps offer children a chance to focus on one activity.

"Developmentally, as children get older they get more specialized in their skills and interests," said Guly. "Summer camp is an opportunity to hone in on those skills. Go with the child's interest and skills and further develop those because they are an important part of a child's identity."

Specialty camps can help children develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills.

For example, St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in Alexandria offers camps that include Quadcopters and Video Editing, MiKiDo Mixed Martial Arts, CSI Detective, Hunger Games, Civil War, Fantasy Battle Gaming, Filmworx Movie Making, Eco-Adventures, Junior Musical Theater, Zoolgy, [and] Junior Veterinarian, said Linda Stratton of SSSAS.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUMMERTIMES CAMP

Campers at SummerTimes at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School show their art project.

**OTHER SPECIALTY CAMPS** include cooking camps, yoga camps and sports camps that run the gamut from tennis to hockey.

"A specialty camp gives children a sense of one particular area for a short period of time and allows them to decide if it is something that they want to pursue long-term," said Bethesda, Md., resident Deborah Helfeld who has taught art and yoga summer camps.

**"Camps give the benefits of social interaction in a more relaxed setting."**

— Linda Guly, Ph.D.,  
Marymount University

At George Mason University, high school juniors and seniors will have an opportunity to attend a camp that will give them a head start on college. "It's not your parents' summer camp," said Sudha Kamath. "Mason is giving high school juniors and seniors the chance to take some rare classes for college credit, covering everything from insects that crawl underground to objects that spin through outer space."

Cathy Evans, director of special projects at George Mason University said, "Subjects include astronomy, biology, chemistry, computer science, economics, environmental science, ethics, global affairs, health behav-

ior, history, mathematics, nutrition and public speaking. The sky's the limit as students explore topics like 'Stars, Galaxies and the Universe' and 'The Ecosphere.'"

Camp Greenway at The Madeira School offers three options for two-week camp sessions with outdoor and indoor activities, said Laura Temple, spokeswoman for school in McLean, Va. "Water sports, games, team sports, music, arts and crafts, and MAD Science are all part of the daily action for campers."

The Fairfax County Park Authority offers camps nature camps that are designed to immerse children in the outdoors. "We want the children to connect with the world around them," said Judy Pedersen, Public Information Officer, Fairfax County Park Authority. "When they leave camp, we hope that they have a deeper appreciation for the world around them for and the environment." You don't need to be a resident of Fairfax County to attend the camps, Pedersen said.

The Arlington Art Center offers summer camps for children and teens that meet daily for several sessions throughout the summer, 3550 Wilson Blvd, Arlington. Classes range from portfolio development to drawing, acrylic painting, and contemporary landscapes with oil paint.

**ANOTHER OPTION** is sleep away camp, which can sometimes be a nerve-wracking but rewarding experience for both a parent and a child.

How does a parent know that their child is ready for to make this leap? "It is going to vary from child to child and family to

family," said Michele C. Garofalo, Ed.D., assistant chair, Department of Counseling and a professor of Psychology at Marymount University in Arlington.

"I think if a child has spent time having sleep overs with friends and has done ok, and is independent and feels comfortable sleeping at friends' houses then it should be fine."

Garofalo suggests that the first sleep away camp experience should be brief.

"I think you want to do a shorter experience to get them ready. The first summer, send them to a four-day camp to test the waters. Their first experience should be at a camp that is close to home. Don't send them to a camp in California the first time."

An open dialog between parent and child is key. "Explain to the child that they

are going to be on their own and tell them what will be expected of them," said Garofalo. "Parents can prepare their children and have an honest conversation about what will happen at the camp."

Those who think they can't afford the cost of summer camp should research financial aid options.

"Many summer camps offer financial aid and there are foundations that give grants for camps," said Rechen.

**"Popular classes and programs always fill early."**

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Summer●Camps  
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# Summer Learning Activities

Local educators offer tips to keep children learning during the summer.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

When summer vacation begins and school ends in a few weeks, learning doesn't have to take a hiatus. Students can keep their academic skills sharp without entering a classroom or even sitting down with a pencil and paper.

Local educators say opportunities for reading, math, science and history skills are plentiful and none require that children set foot in a school. From a walk in the park to a trip to the grocery store, teachable moments are virtually everywhere.

"There are a thousand ways to do it, but reading is critical," said Marjorie Myers, Ed.D., principal, Francis Scott Key Elementary School in Arlington. "I think the most important thing to do is read in a fun way. Read as a family. Parents can read challenging books to their children. Go to your local library and take advantage of fun activities there.

Some elementary schools encourage their students to read and discuss what they are reading with their parents.

Blake M. Giliotti, staff development teacher at Potomac Elementary in Potomac, Md., said, "We ask kids to read and then have discussions with their parent about what they are reading. We don't ask them to do anything written because we don't want them belabored by school work during summer."

The book discussions or questions that parents ask their children about books don't need to be complicated, Giliotti said. "It can also be as simple as saying, 'Tell me about what you are reading.' Engaging in a natural conversation about a book can give you insight into what your child understands and helps build oral communication skills," she said.

**WHEN IT COMES TO** science, Len Annetta, Ph.D., professor of Science at George Mason University says he and his wife Jennifer spend a lot of time at the Smithsonian museums with their two children, Samantha, 13, and Joey, 11.

"We particularly like the Air and Space Museum," he said. "It keeps them engaged in science. We walk around together and we ask them questions after



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

**Campers at Hidden Oaks Nature Center marvel at a crayfish they netted in the creek.**

we leave a museum. When they get home they get to go online and do more research on things that interest them."

There are subtle science lessons to be learned even when taking a summer stroll. "We're out for a nature walk and we see an animal or plant and we start talking about it," said Annetta. "We also look at and talk about grasses and trees and animals."

For parents who don't have a science background, Annetta suggests looking up information on a smart phone during a walk or museum trip.

A shopping trip can also be an opportunity for a math lesson, said Myers. "Take your children to the grocery store and use actual money instead of credit cards, so the children can see a value for money and numbers," she said. "Give children an allowance so they can make the connection between money and the cost of things they want to buy. Sitting in a classroom with fake money doesn't quite get it."

This area offers an abundance of locations for history lessons. "I go out to the battle fields near Manassas," Anetta said. "There are placards that help describe what is going on. There are a lot of local museums that offer the same opportunities."

Keeping a journal is another way to keep skills sharp outside of a structured setting.

"Keeping a travel or camp journal is a fun and easy way to support academic skills," said Benita Cathey, director of admissions at Grace Episcopal School in Alexandria. "A travel or camp journal reinforces writing, geography and social studies and organizational skills."

## CAMPS, CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

**Pre-School Studio.** 9:30-11:30 a.m. at Art at the Center, 2804 Sherwood Hall Lane. June 9-19, Mondays-Thursdays children ages 4-6 attend for explorations of clay, collage, drawing and painting as well as creativity, problem solving, collaboration and fun. Call 703-201-1250 or visit [www.artatthecenter.org](http://www.artatthecenter.org).

**Youth Summer Classes.** Beginning Monday, July 7, Metropolitan School of the Arts offers pre-professional summer dance, music theater and acting camps, as well as a wide variety of youth summer camps where students can explore and learn many facets of the performing and visual arts. Visit [www.metropolitanarts.org](http://www.metropolitanarts.org).

**Martial Arts Camps.** Potomac Kempo teaches Shaolin Kempo, a blend of Japanese Karate and Chinese Kung Fu. Potomac Kempo's locations will host a camp "virtual tour" of China July 14-18 at the new Huntington location, 5914 N. Kings Hwy.; and Japan, July 21-25 at the Foxchase location, 4617 Duke St. For children age 5-12. Campers will learn about art, cuisine, history and language. Visit [www.potomackempo.com/summer-camp](http://www.potomackempo.com/summer-camp) or call 703-206-8064.

**Theater Camp.** Mount Vernon Community Children's Theatre will hold sessions starting June 30 to Aug. 22. There are two-week sessions with morning, afternoon or all day sessions, and one-week sessions that go all day. To register, visit [www.mvccct.org](http://www.mvccct.org).

**Alexandria Summer Recreation.** Summer of Smiles, the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities' Summer Fun Guide, is now available for download at [www.alexandriava.gov/Recreation](http://www.alexandriava.gov/Recreation). Free printed brochures are available at City Hall, recreation centers, and public libraries located throughout the City. Registration for 2014 Summer Camps opens Wednesday, March 19 for City of Alexandria residents and Friday, March 21 for nonresidents. Interested participants may register online at [www.alexandriava.gov/58232](http://www.alexandriava.gov/58232) or in-person at the Lee Center, 1108 Jefferson St. For more information about summer camps, contact Recreation Services at 703-746-5430 or the Camps and Classes Office at 703-746-5414.

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**REGISTRATION & INFORMATION**

1. Get registration form at [www.thelittletheatre.com](http://www.thelittletheatre.com). Click on "Take a Class."
2. Call 703-683-5778 ext. 2 to register by phone with a credit card.

The Little Theatre of Alexandria - 600 Wolfe Street - Alexandria, VA 22314

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One Week Session  
July 21-25 - 9-5 Drama Camp

Two-Week Sessions  
June 30 - July 11 (No Camp July 4th)  
July 28 - August 8  
August 11 - 22

Morning Drama Camp 9:30-12:30  
Afternoon Musical Theatre Camp 1:00-4:00  
All Day (Both AM and PM Options Above)  
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Details and register online at [www.mvccct.org](http://www.mvccct.org)

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