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Choosing a Summer Camp

Now is the time to register for summer camp; nearly infinite choices.

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.

"Summer camp is an opportunity for children to develop social skills with their peers," said Linda Gulyn, 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.

"Developmentally, as children get older they get more specialized in their skills and interests," said Gulyn. "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.

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

At George Mason University, high school juniors and seniors will have an opportunity to attend a camp that will give them a



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

Campers at Hidden Oaks Nature Center find something interesting while exploring the creek.



MADEIRA SCHOOL PHOTOS

Activities from summer camps held at Madeira School in McLean.

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, 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

campers 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.

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.

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Local Farm Provides Fresh Food for Underserved

Arcadia hosts mobile market and camp for children.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

For many, spring symbolizes fresh flowers, new beginnings and baseball, but for those who work at Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture, located on the grounds of the Woodlawn Estate in Mount Vernon, spring means another season of working to ensure that all members of the community have access to fresh, healthy food.

"All of our programs start up again in spring," said Morgan Maloney, farm education manager.

Arcadia runs a camp where children from ages 6-11 get to experience life on a farm and learn about the source of their food. Arcadia officials are raising money to offer financial assistance to those who need it.

"Campers spend most of their time in our educational garden," said Maloney. "One fourth of the farm is specifically designed for that age group and is called the groundhog garden."

"I am really excited because we have 30 farm camp scholarships, but we still need more money to make it happen for families who would not be able to send their children to camp," said Hess.

She is passionate when she talks about her mission to ensure that all children are able to attend a camp where they are safely immersed in the outdoors. "This camp counteracts nature deficit disorder," she said. "There are no electronics. The children are sweaty and happy. They have a lot of inde-



PHOTO BY GENE BUONACORSSI

Arcadia runs a camp where children from 6-11 years old get to experience life on a farm and learn about the source of their food.

pendence and freedom to make choices."

Arcadia offers other educational opportunities for children. "In the spring when school is in session, I am running field trips," said Maloney. "Kids come to the farm for purpose of hands-on learning."

"We have efforts going on right now to expand all of the organization's services," said Hess.

OTHER PROGRAMS, which advance Arcadia's mission and serve the community, include the Arcadia Farm, which serves as an example of environmentally and economically sustainable growing practices; the Mobile Market, which distributes fresh, affordable food to underserved D.C. area neighborhoods; the Food Hub, which provides services that support and promote

local sustainable farms, and the Farm to School program, which provides healthy, local food for school meals as well as hands-on food and farm education.

"There is always a lot of work to do in the off season," said Benjamin Bartley, mobile market director. "It is exciting because we've been able to expand our services each year. We've expanded our number of stops to 10 this year. I feel particularly good about the way that we've gone. I feel pretty prepared for the market season."

"The mobile market is very effective," said Pam Hess, Arcadia's executive director. "They are in the right places, our prices are great, the food is fresh. We get first quality food and bring it to low income people. We don't take leftovers like mushy apples or

How to Get Involved

For more information on becoming a member of Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture, The Arcadia Mobile Market Seasonal Cookbook, the Arcadia Farm Camp, Spring Dinner or any of the organization's other programs, visit <http://arcadiafood.org/>.

ARCADIA FARM CAMP

- ❖ **Farm** — Campers learn about daily farm life. From morning chores like watering, harvesting, and collecting eggs to planting seeds and tilling garden beds, kids get to be the farmers at Arcadia Farm Camp.
- ❖ **Food** — Campers explore the delicious world of sustainable food through activities like chef demos, taste tests, and hands-on preparation of simple dishes and snacks. Plus, all of the veggies come straight from the Farm.
- ❖ **Fun** — Farm camp combines learning and play in a safe, interactive outdoor environment. Each day includes free time in the Groundhog Garden and Natural Play Space, as well as active, educational games led by experienced staff.

bruised bananas and give it to them."

"It is easy to eat well in this town if you have money," she continued. "One thing we've learned from our customers is that they care about eating healthy, but have less economic power to make those wishes known."

The staff is also excited about their new cookbook, "The Arcadia Mobile Market Seasonal Cookbook," written by Arcadia's culinary educator and mobile market outreach coordinator JuJu Harris.

"We put together seasonal recipes that incorporate ingredients that are WIC (The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) staples," said Bartley. "We are going to be giving these away to those who use food assistance programs. We're looking forward to getting it into the hands of those who it was written for."

Summer Learning Activities

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 ac-

tivities 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 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

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

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 class room 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," Annetta 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."

Magic of Mothers Host Math Mania

Students age 6-12 compete, share love of math.

BY JANELLE GERMANOS
THE CONNECTION

Students from elementary and middle schools in Fairfax Station and Lorton practiced their math skills and experienced the excitement of competition by participating in the Magic of Mothers Math Mania competition on April 26.

Magic of Mothers is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting STEM education in schools. The organization hopes to bring STEM education to underprivileged students.

"Our mission is to bring education to all kids," said Magic of Mothers founder Shikha Dixit.

STEM education in the United States has not caught up with the rest of the world, and some students are not as highly-qualified for positions. That's why Dixit wants to encourage students to practice and learn more math and science skills.

The group has participated in the FIRST Lego league competition, which introduces STEM con-

cepts to students aged 9-14. They are currently looking for volunteers, as well as students who need sponsoring.

Dixit said the group was moved by participating in a recent STEM fair at Chantilly High School.

"We want Lorton to be known as a STEM community," Dixit said. "We want to lead the students in the right direction."

Dixit stressed that the math competition was not about winning, but about participating and enjoying the love of learning.

Mount Vernon School Board member Dan Storck was also in attendance. Dixit said Storck has been a great supporter of Magic of Mother's STEM initiatives.

"This type of STEM education is so important," Storck said at the competition.

Dhruv Kapur, a student at Laurel Hill Elementary, said math is his favorite subject.

"It's so much fun. It's a great subject to learn," Kapur said.

Winners of the competition included Vivek Ramakrishna, Pramodini Arulkumar, Abhay



Dhruv Kapur and Shreya Sharma, students at Laurel Hill Elementary School, volunteered at the Magic of Mothers Math Mania competition on April 26.

PHOTOS BY JANELLE GERMANOS/THE CONNECTION



Akul Dixit, a first-grader who goes to school in Lorton, participated in the Magic of Mothers Math Mania competition on April 26.

Mathur, Arjun Mathur, Shreya Sharma, Giridhar Ganta, Akul Dixit, Sarayu Jilludumudi, Abhay Mathur, Anshika Govil, Ruhani Prasad and Arjun Mathur.

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Camps Notes

Hiring Staff for Summer Programs

The Fairfax County Park Authority has scheduled open hiring sessions to recruit summer staff for its Rec-PAC (Pretty Awesome Children) program, a six-week structured recreational program for elementary school children that runs from June 30-Aug. 7, 2014. An open hiring session will take place at the Park Authority's headquarters in Fairfax, and another session will take place at Navy Elementary School, also in Fairfax.

Rec-PAC will operate at 50 elementary school locations around Fairfax County on weekdays this summer. Staff will be assigned to a site and work daily from 8:15 a.m.-3:45 p.m. or 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Applicants must be at least age 18 and bring an original social security card and a DMV photo I.D. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/rec-pac/rec-pac-open-hires.htm for more information and applications.

Open hire sessions are scheduled on Wednesday, May 14, 5-7 p.m. at Navy Elementary school and Thursday, May 29, 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. on the first floor of the Herrity Building. The Herrity Building is located at 12055 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia 22035. Navy ES is located at 3500 West Ox Road, Fairfax, Virginia 22033.

For additional information, contact the Rec-PAC office by email at Recpac@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Summer Reading Programs

Find suggested summer reading lists by grade level on the Fairfax County Public Schools website at www.fcps.edu/is/summer/reading.

The Fairfax County Summer Reading Program encourages children and teens to read for pleasure during summer vacation. It is held in cooperation with Fairfax

County Public Schools. The summer reading program runs June 20-Aug. 30. Children from birth to sixth grade read 15 books. Students in grades 7-12 read eight books. Learn more about the Fairfax County Public Library summer reading program www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/srp.

In order to encourage and support reading achievement, every student who will be entering FCPS grades six through 12 in the fall must read at least one book over the summer. The follow-up in the fall will be determined by each school. The Summer Reading lists contain suggestions for reading; although students may read any other book that is approved by their parents, except where individual schools have issued their own summer reading requirements. Any school-based requirements supercede the County requirement.

Some schools and courses, particularly at the high school level, have additional summer assignments. Parents and students should inquire about summer assignments when registering at the school. Most of these assignments are posted at the individual school web sites.

FCPS students can access online digital books (ebooks): www.fcps.edu/is/libraryservices/books.shtml

The Fairfax County Public Libraries have lists of many good books for readers of all ages: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/reading/

Connections reading is designed to assist teachers, parents, and others working with children in selecting books that reinforce the Virginia Standards of Learning in the four core content areas of English, history, math, and science. The books in the Connections database represent a wide variety of books available for children; however, it is not inclusive of all the books available. Remember, not all books are appropriate for use with all children; read and familiarize yourself with a book before you decide to use it with children. <http://itweb.fcps.edu/connections/index.cfm>

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Ideas for Summer

Avoid those dreaded words: 'I'm bored.'

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
 THE CONNECTION

Molly McAlister enjoys the freedom of summer, but there are three words she dreads hearing: "Mom, I'm bored." Creating activities to keep her three children busy during the summer is a task she enjoys, but it isn't always easy.

"I love taking the kids swimming or on bike rides, but sometimes I run out of ideas," said McAlister who lives in Centreville.

Many parents allow "screen time" to keep children happy, but it's important to interact with them as well.

"Some parents will give their child an iPhone or an iPad to entertain them," said Michele C. Garofalo, Ed.D., assistant chair, Department of Counseling and a professor of Psychology at Marymount University in Arlington. "Interacting with children and being involved with them rather than giving them electronic activities is important. It is important for kids to figure out how to interact with their parents and friends."

"Summer is a wonderful time for parents to get to know their kids and interact with them in a different way," said Garofalo, who lives in McLean.

One way that families can spend quality time together is by creating art, said Dabney Cortina of the McLean Project for the Arts in McLean. In addition to summer camps, McLean Project for the Arts offers family workshops where parents and children create art together.

"The whole process of creating is so important to a child's development and it's so important to be with your children and create something together," said Cortina. "I see the smiles as the children and adults put their heads together to create things. I think it's also a wonderful release for adults."

"Summer is a wonderful time for parents to get to know their kids and interact with them in a different way."

— Michele C. Garofalo, Ed.D

"Let them spearhead a yard sale," Garofalo said. "Kids gather the items, make flyers and put the flyers in everyone's mailbox. They can donate the money to charity so you can tie in a service project."

Spend time in the kitchen. "You and your children can do a lot of baking and donate the items to a homeless shelter," said Garofalo. "With parental approval and guidance, kids can also do dog walking or water flowers for neighbors who are away."

For families who want to spend time in nature, Len Annetta, Ph.D. Professor in the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University suggests the Manassas National Battlefield Park. The park, which is home to more than 160 species of birds, has been recognized National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area.

"Our area has so much history," said Annetta. "Most of these place don't cost money but can immerse students in something educational, which is really critical."

FOR PARENTS who plan a summer of varied activities, specialty camps as well as parent-child activities are worthy options. Even one or two sessions of week-long specialty camps can add to a child's summer.

Deb Burger of the Potomac Horse Center in North Potomac, Md., said they offer camps where children learn equestrian skills and are given information about the history of horses, breeds, colors, markings, anatomy, horse care and

grooming. "Campers also do horse-related arts and crafts," said Burger. "They have a good time, make friends, increase their love of horses and improve their ability to ride. Kids come from Maryland, Virginian and even overseas."

Tony Castrilli, Director of Public Affairs for Fairfax County says the county is offering nature camps during the summer.

In Alexandria, Morgan Maloney runs the Arcadia Farm Camp for Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture in Mount Vernon. "Campers learn about farm life first hand," she said. Activities include collecting eggs tilling soil and planting seeds.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY



Campers at Hidden Oaks Nature Center marvel at a crayfish they netted.

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How To Prepare for New SAT

Prepare this summer by reading as many challenging books as possible.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Linda Mitchell and her 15-year-old daughter, Alexis, say they don't really know what to expect when Alexis sits for the SAT college admissions exam in 2016, but they're not too worried at this point. Two years is a long time.

"I'm just going to make sure she gets the best education possible," said Mitchell, who lives in Great Falls. "There's nothing else that I can really do at this point."

Local experts said that Mitchell's strategy is wise, explaining that the best way current ninth grade students (and those who are younger) can prepare for the test is to become strong readers and writers.

"It would appear that College Board's recent announcement regarding the redesigning of the SAT will indeed have some impact on how students, mainly current ninth graders, will prepare for standardized tests in the coming years," said Michael R. Hude, a college counselor at The Heights School in Potomac, Md. "The best way to prepare for any standardized test is to work hard in everyday coursework and to read as many good and challenging books as possible."

Reading and reading comprehension skills are key. "There are kids today who love to read. They've been exposed to an extensive vocabulary so they aren't afraid of words," said test preparation expert Harriet Broder of Breakthrough Test Prep in Potomac. "If you're a strong reader, you're going to do well on the test."

So how can parents help their children become more effective readers? "I have had students who say they hate reading," said Broder. "One thing that parents can do, for example, for children who don't like to read, is if their child wants to go see a movie, the parent can say 'Read at least two or three reviews about this movie and then tell me why you want to see it.' That is the place to start for non-readers."

Students, said Broder, should also be exposed to a variety of writing styles. "There's no magic SAT fairy dust," she said. "Students should be exposed to different types of writing. They will be able to apply their skills more comfortably."

Broder also said improving reading speed and learning to recognize an author's main point and how the author had developed that point are critical skills. "Kids need to be trained to read to learn the author's thesis," she said. "Some students can read a

chapter in a school book and can answer questions at the end, but they can't tell you the main point the author is trying to make."

Broder said an improved reading ability can be accomplished with "step-by-step ... strategies in critical reading, problem-solving [and] vocabulary development ..."

Officials at Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington said they will focus on professional development strategies for teachers so they can help prepare students for the new test format.

"The proposed changes to the SAT will definitely have some impact in the way students prepare for the exam. The elimination of more obscure vocabulary words, free online test prep materials and aligning the test to coincide with what students actually learn in high school will allow students to focus more clearly on what they need to know to do well," said Kristina Herbst, the school's director of college counseling. "Also, the elimination of the penalty for wrong answers will make the test more user-friendly and help eliminate much anxiety over guessing while taking the test."

For those concerned about how the revised test might impact their admittance to their top college choices, officials at Marymount University in Arlington said

Test Prep

The College Board has partnered with Khan Academy, a not-for-profit educational organization; to provide free, supplemental test preparation resources for those taking the soon-to-be redesigned SAT in 2016. By spring 2015, students will have access to state-of-the-art, interactive learning tools. Those taking the 2014 or 2015 SAT can gain access to hundreds of previously unreleased math, reading and writing questions from real SATs and more than 200 videos that show step-by-step solutions to each question. Visit www.khanacademy.org/sat.

they don't foresee a large adjustment.

"We will need to adjust to the changes in scoring, but otherwise no significant difference at this time," said Francesca Reed, associate vice president for enrollment at Marymount. "When we evaluate applicants, we look at the applicant holistically and consider not only their high school GPA and rigor, but their letters of reference and the level of engagement at their school and/or community. In an age when colleges are considering test-optional admissions, standardized tests will need to demonstrate that they provide admissions offices with resources that otherwise wouldn't have been determined through grades and other requirements."

"The best way to prepare for any standardized test is to work hard in everyday coursework and to read as many good and challenging books as possible."

— Michael R. Hude, The Heights School

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BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

A whodunnit, murder mystery, musical comedy, "Curtains" is Robinson Secondary's upcoming Cappies play. Show times are Thursday-Saturday, May 8, 9, 10, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$12 at www.robinsondrama.org.

There's a show within the show, and the lead actress of that play, "Robbin' Hood," is murdered on opening night at the end of her performance. So the cast and crew are kept in the theater for questioning because they're all suspects. The story happens over 48 hours as the actors are replacing the lead, rehearsing and fixing their show, while trying to solve the murder.

There'll be a 22-piece orchestra, plus a real cast and crew of 85 that's been rehearsing since January. "We wanted a show that was a little off the beaten path, had a large cast and was light, frothy fun with music," explained Director Chip Rome. "And since it's about the theater, it's particularly fun for us to do and the audience should enjoy it."

IT TAKES PLACE at Boston's Colonial Theatre in 1959 and is PG-13 for language, violence and sexual innuendo. Nili Bassman, a former Robinson theater student, was an understudy in the Broadway show directed by another Robinson alumnus, Scott Ellis. So, said Rome, "It's an appropriate show for us to do."

Delighted with his cast, he said, "I have talented people in the leads – and everyone who auditioned for a lead role was so good that they're either a lead or in the ensemble." And for the first time, audiences will see what the backstage really looks like and will watch the stage manager and crew move the sets into position.

"There are numerous costume changes, ranging from formal wear to cowboy duds to pajamas," said Rome. "The audience will like the broadly drawn, fun characters and the plot's surprises. They'll also love the jazzy music, and the dancing is fabulous."

Senior Jamie Green portrays Christopher Belling, "Robbin' Hood's" director. "He's British, egotistical and takes credit for what others do," said Green. "He's witty, but sarcastic. He hated the victim, as did everyone else, because she was mean and not talented. It's fun playing him because he has so much attitude and I have the freedom to decide how to treat the other actors."

Green's favorite song is "In the Same

Boat," a big number that's sung three times because the "Robbin' Hood" composers keep rewriting it. "The final version is amazing and so much fun to watch," he said. "The whole show keeps you on your toes, trying to figure out who's the killer. There's happy-go-lucky, upbeat, square-dancing music and some lyrics have double entendres. And people's priorities to solve the murder get put aside to fix the play they're rehearsing."

Playing the detective's love interest, Nikki Harris, is senior Maddy Ingram. "She's the stereotypical, naïve ingénue," said Ingram. "She loves theater more than anything and is hardworking and passionate about what she does. She's a bit ditz, but there's more to her than meets the eye."

It's Ingram's first lead at Robinson and the most challenging because of her really big dance number. "Nikki has her fun moments, and I like playing a love interest and flirting," said Ingram. "And I relate to her because musical theater's what I want to do, too."

SHE LIKES THE SONG, "Tough Act to Follow," because it's cheerful and theatrical and "the choreography's cute and quirky. The show's very clever; it gives an inside view of what theater's like. There are a lot of mess-ups along the way, but the final product is really good."

Senior Spencer Boyd portrays Lt. Frank Cioffi, a Boston police detective trying to solve the murder. "He's a fun character because he's trying to be serious and do his job, but he has a tremendous love of theater," said Boyd. "So he's giddy to be onstage and has to find that balance and stay professional. He also does community theater whenever he can."

Boyd loves his part because "I like playing comedic roles and my character has some great one-liners." As for the audience, he said, "It's a fun show to watch. Everyone has lots of energy and there are great jokes and musical numbers. It's just a good time at the theater."

Playing Georgia Hendricks, half of the "Robbin' Hood" songwriting team, is senior Katie Rogers. "She's mature, but pretty sassy," said Rogers. "Her composing partner is her ex-husband Aaron [Stephen Diggs], so it's tense working with him. But she's also a caring person who comforts the others after the murder. She gets to have married-couple arguments with Aaron and returns to the stage after the murder. She also has a really big, song-and-dance number, 'Thataway,' where people are standing on tables and doing back flips. And it's been so much fun doing that number as Madame Marian in 'Robbin' Hood.'"

Overall, said Rogers, "The audience will love that it's a murder mystery that's funny, campy and lighthearted. And each character has their own back story, so the audience gets to know them throughout the show."



PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Sharing a fantasy dance are Maddy Ingram and Spencer Boyd in Robinson Secondary's production of 'Curtains.'



Looking for good reviews of their play are (from left) Stephen Diggs, Hannah Sikora, Alex Bulova and Katie Rogers.