

# Summer 2014 Camps

Education & Activities



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# Choosing a Summer Camp

Now is the time to register; many 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.

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.

"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. "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 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."

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, Zoology, [and] Junior Veterinarian, said Linda Stratton of SSSAS.

Other specialty camps include cooking



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

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

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 opportu-

nity 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 behavior, 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.

**ANOTHER OPTION** is sleep away camp. 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.

"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."

## Many Ideas for Summer Activities

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 can't afford to send all three children to camp," said McAlister who lives in Centreville. "I love taking the kids swimming or on bike rides, but sometimes I run out of ideas."

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."

**COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS** are a great way to

spend time and help children learn during the summer.

"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.

Session	Grades	Dates
Little Adventurers: Storytelling!	1-3	June 30 - July 3
Operation: Improv	4-7	July 7-11
Little Adventurers: Fairytale!	1-3	July 14-18
Little Adventurers: Mysteries!	1-3	July 21-25
Backstage Creations	4-7	July 28-Aug 1
Let's Put On A Show!	4-7	Aug 4-15
Little Adventurers: On Stage!	1-3	Aug 18-22

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# 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 activities there."

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

their parents.

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

**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."

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."

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."

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