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# Preparing for Sleep Away Camp

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

A child's first residential summer camp experience can be fraught with emotions that run the gamut from excitement to terror. While glee at the thought of a summer filled with sports, swimming, crafts and new-found friendships can be the dominant feeling, the thought of an extended period of time away from home can cause sadness and anxiety for both parents and their children.

An American Camp Association study showed that 96 percent of children who attend sleep away camps experience homesickness at some point during their stay. While these emotions are normal, parents can help children tame the pre-camp jitters. The life-long lessons gained from such camps make it worth the effort.

"Becoming comfortable with your child being away at summer camp, perhaps the first extended separation you have had, is a matter of trust," said David Kaplan, Ph.D. of the American Counseling Association in Alexandria, Va.

"Trusting your child that they can handle themselves without your supervision. Trusting that they can handle relationships with other children. Trusting that they can get up in the morning, take a shower, wash their clothes, and change their sheets without your prodding."

**ACKNOWLEDGING THAT HOMESICKNESS** is normal and many campers experience it, can

SEE PREPARING,  
CAMPS PAGE 7

**"Remind your child they are stronger than they feel in the moment and that engaging in camp activities can be helpful."**



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## From Colonial History to Future Entrepreneurs

Campers can explore diverse interests in specialty summer camps.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**T**his summer dozens of elementary school-aged children will travel back in time to the Colonial Era where, among other things, they'll learn to spin cotton into cloth for garments.

Learning how to run a lemonade stand like a Fortune 500 company and use the profits to invest in the stock market will

**“During the school year, there is so much emphasis on testing that the creative and collaborative nature of children gets lost.”**

— Carolyn Lorente, Ph.D.

be on the agenda for other local children. Both activities are offered by local specialty camps aimed at giving children opportunities to explore their interests in a way that they cannot during the school year.

“I think summer camps are a great way to promote thriving if it is done right,” said Carolyn Lorente, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria and a camp consultant. “During the school year, there is so much emphasis on testing that the creative and collaborative nature of children gets lost. A great camp can create space for our children to flourish.”

**SPECIALTY CAMPS** offer young campers a chance to focus on a specific area of interest such as cooking, financial literacy and even gaming.

For example, Spark Business Academy, a Northern Virginia based organization that teaches financial literacy to young students, is offering its Future Millionaires Camp in Arlington. Students learn about money concepts that range from setting up a lemonade stand that makes a profit to understanding the stock market.

“The name is definitely tongue in cheek,” said Chuchi Arevalo, the organization’s founder. “We teach personal finance, leadership and innova-

tion. We give them life skills that they aren’t learning in school and promote financial literacy that is fun even for students in first and second grade.”

**RIISING FIFTH-** and sixth-grade students will get a chance to take a trip back in time this summer at Mount Vernon’s Camp Washington. During each of the three one-week sessions, campers explore the history of George Washington’s estate and learn about his legacy.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT FAIRFAX

**Camp Washington at Mount Vernon gives campers a glimpse of early American life.**



PHOTO COURTESY OF MASON GAME & TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY

**Students in the Mason Game & Technology Academy Summer Camp will be offered classes in Game Design, Creation and Entrepreneurship, Minecraft and Cyber Defense.**

From farming and spinning fibers into cloth to making ice cream and meeting the estate’s heritage breed animals, hands-on activities will give campers a glimpse of many aspects of early American life at Mount Vernon.

“The summer camp is designed to help engage students while having fun,” said Melissa Wood, spokeswoman for Mount Vernon. “[It] gives kids the opportunity to go behind the scenes and experience history in their own backyard.”

### For More Information

#### Game and Technology Summer Camps

[potomacacademy.gmu.edu/mgta/summer/](http://potomacacademy.gmu.edu/mgta/summer/)

#### Future Millionaires Bootcamp/Stock Market Acres

[moneynewsforkids.com/](http://moneynewsforkids.com/)

#### Camp Washington and more at Mount Vernon

[www.mountvernon.org/plan-your-visit/calendar/events/camp-washington-summer-day-camp-at-mount-vernon/](http://www.mountvernon.org/plan-your-visit/calendar/events/camp-washington-summer-day-camp-at-mount-vernon/)

**YOUNG GAME DESIGN** aficionados can spend the summer with Mason Game & Technology Academy’s (MGTA) camps. Students take classes such as Game Design, Creation and Entrepreneurship, Minecraft and Cyber Defense.

“We run our classes at Mason in Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William,” said Vera Lichtenberg, Director of the Mason Game & Technology Academy at George Mason University.

“We also do a great deal of community outreach to train teachers, engage underserved students, and generally, help students realize that Game Design is a STEM field that not only engages those who love technology, but also those on the artistic side: writers, music composers [and] designers.”

MGTA is part of the Mason Computer Game Design Program and the Community Outreach Youth Program for the Virginia Serious Game Institute.



# Sail Away the Summer

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
THE CONNECTION

**A**my Zang says this year all of the Flying Scots were painted in the fall and are looking beautiful. “We’re now doing the bottom paint and then will check all of the boats to be sure they are ready to sail.” Zang is the Director and Owner of the Youth Sailing Day Camp at the Washington Sailing Marina. This year sailing camp begins May 31, the Tuesday after Memorial Day and ends the week of August 15-19th. “There won’t be many kids the first week because some schools are still in session, but we’ll have it anyway.” The classes run from 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and are open to rising third graders through 15 years of age.

Zang says the Sunfish is for beginners and the Flying Scot for intermediates. “But we’re going to continue the Skippers Club this year for those kids who have received their Sunfish license and are ready for a less structured class. It’s more like a club, more get out and play games and have fun on the boat.” She says this really started by accident two years ago and became so popular that they have added another class this year. It is a small class of nine kids who have mastered sailing with instructors hopping on and off.

Sailing campers can move to the intermediate stage with a skipper or crew license. The Flying Scot is a 17-foot boat with five campers plus an instructor. It is a bigger boat than the Sunfish with two sails and heads out to the river. “Some kids learn better with the constant reinforcement of an instructor or they like the immediate feedback.”

“The advanced class sails a Hobie Cat that is harder to sail or some students choose racing 420’s.” Four weeks out of the summer, Adventures on a Big Boat is offered on Catalina 25. “The bigger the boat, it reacts differently.”

Classes are already more than 50 percent full for the summer. “Last year we had the



**Sailors rig the Sunfish in preparation for beginning the day’s lesson at Youth Sailing Camp at the Washington Sailing Marina.**

best summer ever in my 24 years here or even the 56 years the camp has been in operation.” She continues, “we had just over 1,200 kids. Fantastic. It was due to my staff. If the kids are having fun, they want to sign up for more weeks.” Zang estimates that more than 50 percent of the camp attendees come back, often bringing a friend.

Looking back over the years Zang says she makes constant adjustments. One of these is to have enough instructors to keep up with populations such as learning disabled. Zang is a special education teacher during the school year.

“A number of instructors return every year so we can fine tune their training which makes new instructors this year. “Although Zang has 65 staff on the rolls, on any one day she is juggling 40 sailing counselors, 70 boats and 130 campers in sailing classes. “I tell my instructors everything has to be

in its place to make the camp run smoothly.” Zang says, “I feel blessed and lucky. We are like a family.”

Zang says she is going to four weddings this year of previous counselors—in Argentina, Richmond, Alexandria and British Columbia.

Camp begins at 9:30 am with a half hour discussion on safety procedures and a look ahead at the plan for the day. Morning sailing is from 10-noon with an hour break for lunch, “and if it’s really hot, I turn on the sprinkler.” After a 15 minute recap of the morning lessons learned, they sail again from 1:30-3:40 pm. “The kids do it all. They put the boats together and take them apart.” Zang says on the days they can’t go out because it is too too windy they have come up with ways to occupy 130 kids on land by setting up stations where kids rotate from boat building, to flag making, to other things related to sailing. Zang adds there were only two of those non-sailing days last summer.

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION



**Summer counselors at National Marina Youth Sailing Day Camp give the sailors a safety lesson each day before heading for the Potomac.**



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## Providence Elementary STEM Lab Wins Excellence Award

Providence Elementary School's STEM Lab was recognized as one of 24 programs worldwide as a program of excellence from the International Technology and Engineering Educator Association (ITEEA).

Sponsored by the ITEEA and Paxton/Patterson, the Program Excellence Award is one of the highest honors given to Technology and Engineering classroom programs on the elementary, middle or high school levels. It is presented in recognition of outstanding contributions to the profession and students. The award was presented at the ITEEA annual conference earlier this month.

The Providence Elementary STEM Lab began in 2012. With two teachers dedicated to the lab, it welcomes all students in over 40 classrooms from grades K-6 throughout the year to solve challenging projects using the engineering design process. Each class rotates throughout the lab and spends five continuous days with each rotation solving a different challenge. The students work in teams and collaborate to find the best possible solution to their problem. Failure is encouraged to teach resilience, creativity and determination.

## PVI's Scott Allen Named Girls Basketball Coach of the Year

Scott Allen, the Varsity Girls' Basketball Coach at Paul VI Catholic High School in Fairfax, has been selected as the 2015-16 American Family Insurance ALL-USA Girls Basketball Coach of the Year.

Coach Allen has coached at PVI for 14 years. During the 2015-2016 season, Coach Allen led the Panthers to a 33-1 finish. The Lady Panthers won the Naples Shootout tournament, their 10th consecutive Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association title and third consecutive Washington Catholic Athletic Conference title.

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Questions? Contact Director **Vera Lichtenberg** at [vlichten@gmu.edu](mailto:vlichten@gmu.edu) or call 703-993-9889.

**Registration & admin support powered by Mason's Potomac Arts Academy:**  
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## Academic Camps Combine Education and Fun

Local camps help students maintain school skills in a relaxed environment.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

One summer Ana Lado created a summer camp activity for students at her neighborhood pool. The Marymount professor set up a picnic area, and included activities and books. Her plan was to engage the students and give them the opportunity to read and build reading skills while still enjoying fun activities traditionally associated with summer.

"I got six kids who were older to read to six kindergartners. I chose kids who had potential, but who were at risk," said Ana Lado, Ph.D., professor of Education at Marymount University in Arlington. "Reading with a kindergartner or first grader for 15 minutes got the students reading and built their confidence."

This summer Lado and her colleagues at Marymount are offering "3E: Explore, Enrich, Enjoy," one of several area camps with an academic component. Their goal is to enable students to brush up on, gain or maintain academic skills in a relaxed environment.

Marymount's 3E camp enables campers to choose what they focus on at camp. In addition to traditional camp activities, the camp will include academic projects like exploring science through nature and electronic gadgets, studying math by making boats, language arts by writing their own stories and fine arts by creating plays and cartoons.

For those who want an in-depth review of a school subject and the chance to participate in hands-on summer camp activities, academic camps fill both needs.

"[Academic camps] supplement what students are getting during the school year and allow them to experience subjects and topics that they're not getting in public school," said Dan Stalcup, Associate Director for Fairfax Collegiate, a Herndon-based organization that offers summer programs for students entering third through ninth grade.

Programs at Fairfax Collegiate run the gamut from filmmaking and robotics to engineering and classic children's literature. For example, third and fourth grade students can learn to craft their own short stories during a Story Writing course in Alexandria, Chantilly and Ashburn.

Campers who enjoy reading and want to delve into award-winning novels by authors such as Madeleine L'Engle or Rebecca Stead can take "Reading Newbury Winners" with sessions in Chantilly, Ashburn, Fairfax, McLean and Reston. Students can spend two weeks reading books that have been



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

**Kara Dedon, a Marymount University graduate student, will be the director of the school's camp.**

awarded the Newbery Medal for excellence in literature for children.

Fifth and sixth graders who love math and want to hone their analytical and logical thinking skills can spend their time engaging in chess, Stratego and

other mind-bending activities in the "Brain Games" camp, which will be offered in Chantilly, Reston, Herndon, McLean, Alexandria and Oakton.

Future detectives might enjoy taking a forensic science class in Alexandria, Chantilly, Herndon, Ashburn, Falls Church and McLean. "Students learn about the science in criminal justice, like blood-typing and fingerprinting by actually doing the experiments and seeing them in action," said Stalcup.

"Students get a lot of personal attention because the classes are small, and the instructors either have or are pursuing a degree in the topic they're teaching," said Stalcup. "They're all very passionate about the subject they're teaching."

Academic camps might be a good fit for students who are curious about a particular area of study. "Many parents want something that is both fun and educational, meaning it will help their child keep [busy] and develop skills needed during the school year," said Tina M. Morris, Child Development Programs Consultant at George Mason University. "I think both parents and



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COLLEGIATE

**A fifth grade student learns about the structure of the human heart during a Human Biology and Anatomy at Fairfax Collegiate.**

educators realize that summer vacation does not have to be a break from learning."

The decision to send a child to a camp that focuses on reading, science, math or another school subject instead of a purely recreational camp is a personal one, says Lado. "There are some kids who can visit their grandparents in Maine all summer and they come back to school in the fall and pick up where they left off," she said. "Then there are other kids who can't pick up easily. Those are the kids who would benefit from an academic program."

Students appreciate the ability to focus on one subject in a relaxed atmosphere in an academic camp. "If kids are taking a subject at a fast-clip pace, but they don't do well, they miss key skills. The next year they

**"I think both parents and educators realize that summer vacation does not have to be a break from learning."**

**— Tina M. Morris, Child Development Programs Consultant at George Mason University.**

move to a higher level class, but the same problem still exists," said Lado. "When they take a week or two during the summer and immerse themselves in a subject, they go stronger into the next school year. In camp, it's the only thing they're doing academically and they can concentrate on it."

For example, The Madeira School in McLean is offering summer programs in Trigonometry and Geometry. "These courses are intended for advancement into higher level math classes, and based on our classes taught during the academic year," said Ashley Smith, Associate Director of Communications

at Madeira. "A student who is interested in math and wishes to advance to higher levels will benefit, as well as students who need a refresher or a better understanding before moving ahead."

When choosing an academic camp, parents should look for camps that are not all work and no play. "I want to make sure it has a healthy balance of recreational and educational enrichment activities," said Morris. "If the campers are enjoying the activities and the counselors are skilled, the program should, as a natural effect, promote the building of positive relationships with their peers and their counselors."



# Preparing for Sleep Away Camp

FROM CAMPS PAGE 2

help children accept and cope with their emotions.

"Expecting to miss home and feel somewhat anxious helps children feel less surprised and overwhelmed when it occurs," said Barbara Meehan, Ph.D. executive director, Counseling and Psychological Services, George Mason University in Fairfax, Va.

A child's apprehension can be eased when parents share their own camp experiences, particularly positive memories.

"Don't let your child get caught up in your own anxiety about leaving for camp," said Linda McKenna Guly, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Marymount University in Arlington, Va. "Kids sometimes worry about the parents they left behind. Be positive, but not sad that your child is leaving."

Meehan says that developing a few self-soothing activities like playing outdoors or reading is one strategy for helping children deal with feelings of missing home. Identifying people with whom young campers can share their emotions is another means for dealing with homesickness.

"Talking to a camp counselor and even peers can help ease the difficult feelings and often they will learn they are not alone," said Meehan.

Encouraging a child to make friends and become involved in camp activities will put the focus on the positive aspects of camp. Packing letters and stamped envelopes and developing a plan for letter exchange can help a child feel connected to their families.

"Isolating and avoiding what feels hard can often worsen anxiety and homesickness," said Meehan. "Remind your child they are stronger than they feel in the moment and that engaging in camp activities can be helpful."

There are times however when a child might not be ready for residential camps. The American Camp Association reports that while most cases of homesickness subside, there are cases — if a child is not eating or sleeping, for example — when it could be time to seek help. "Consult with camp professionals about resources if your child's anxiety worsens or persists," said Meehan.

Summer Camps



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### First Place Winners

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**Ken Moore**, *Oak Hill/Herndon Connection* – Feature writing portfolio. Judge's comment: The writer took individual little stories about the people at the Farmers Market and put them together in a good read. The story on the service for the Latin teacher was particularly moving.

**Ken Moore**, *Reston Connection* – Feature series or continuing story. Judge's comment: This was an in-depth series, very informative and interesting to read. The subject matter was unique.

**Jeanne Theismann**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Personal service writing. Judge's comment: ...an outstanding job on providing an interesting detail around an individual who has passed away. She provides a wonderful context to the lives of people who may be overlooked in the typical press. Her insights into these individuals reflects her research into the subject and her analysis of the character of that individual. When I go, I hope she writes about me.

### Second Place Winners

**Marilyn Campbell**, *Oak Hill/Herndon Connection* – Health, science and environmental writing

**Jean Card**, **Laurence Foong**, **Renee Ruggles**, *Vienna/Oakton Connection* – Informational graphics

**Jean Card**, **Sarai Johnson**, **Steven Mauren**, *Arlington Connection* – Special edition

**Abigail Constantino**, *Fairfax Connection* – General news photo

**Steve Hibbard**, **Sarai Johnson**, **Hope Nelson**, **Shirley Ruhe**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Entertainment pages

**Mary Kimm**, *Great Falls Connection* – Editorial writing



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**Kenneth Lourie**, *Oak Hill/Herndon Connection* – Column writing

**Ken Moore**, *Great Falls Connection* – Health, science and environmental writing

**Ken Moore**, *Oak Hill/Herndon Connection* – General news writing

**Tim Peterson**, *Burke Connection* – Education writing

**Tim Peterson**, *Fairfax Station/Clifton/Lorton Connection* – Business and financial writing

**Tim Peterson**, *Mount Vernon Gazette* – In-depth or investigative reporting subject

**Tim Peterson**, *Springfield Connection* – Personal service writing

**Jon Roetman**, *Oak Hill/Herndon Connection* – Sports writing portfolio

**Jeanne Theismann**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Headlines

### Third Place Winners

**John Bordner**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Feature photo

**Eden Brown**, **Laurence Foong**, **Steven Mauren**, **Vernon Miles**, **Shirley Ruhe**, *Arlington Connection* – Special edition

**Marilyn Campbell**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Personal service writing

**Jean Card**, **Laurence Foong**, **Renee Ruggles**, *Mount Vernon Gazette* – Informational graphics

**Geovani Flores**, **Laurence Foong**, **Mary Kimm**, **Kemal Kurspahic**, *Oak Hill/Herndon Connection* – Editorial pages

**Laurence Foong**, *Great Falls Connection* – Informational graphics

**Vernon Miles**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Government writing

**Ken Moore**, *McLean Connection* – Feature writing portfolio

**Tim Peterson**, *Burke Connection* – Breaking news writing

**Tim Peterson**, *Springfield Connection* – Government writing

**Tim Peterson**, *Springfield Connection* – Public safety writing