

SUMMER PROGRAMS provide children and young adults with opportunities for learning, socialization, and having fun.

From day to residential programs and arts to sports, there are a variety of camps available for people of all abilities. The following resources can help families find a program that meets the camper's interests and needs.

Inclusive camps serve campers with and without disabilities. For example, Nashville's Adventure Science Center offers a series of Summer camps for children entering kindergarten through eighth grade. Campers explore different scientific experiments and themes each week; 2007 topics include animals, space, robots, "The Science of Music" and more. The Center provides inclusivity by handling each camper's needs on an individual basis.

Before camp begins, camp coordinators meet with the prospective campers' parents to discuss the best care for their children.

The National Center on Accessibility's Discover Camp project encourages such camp visits, which allow caregivers to determine the program's philosophy toward including all children in activities. Discover Camp, a collaborative project dedicated to the inclusion of children with disabilities and chronic illnesses in recreational opportunities, provides these suggestions for selecting a camp for a person with a disability:

- * Visit the camp and talk with the camp director to discover the philosophy of the camp, especially if your child has a disability. What is their approach in including all children in activities?
- * Know the staff to camper ratio.
- * Learn about the ways staff are trained and the policies that guide their behavior. Understand the standards that the camp must follow. Many camps are endorsed and certified by the American Camping Association. The ACA annually publishes a parents' guide to accredited camps ... a good place to start. Visit their Web site at www.ACACamps.org.
- * What activities are offered? How will your child be included in those activities? Assess the accessibility of facilities.
- * What type of medical support is provided at camp?
- * What are the appropriate ways to communicate to staff to get progress reports on your child?

One East Tennessee camp included a child with cerebral palsy by providing accessible transportation and a support professional. With advance planning, flexibility, and creativity, camp programs and families can work together to ensure a successful camp experience for campers of all abilities.

Some families find that specialty camps, or camps serving a specific population, are more appropriate for their campers. Examples of specialty camps include those offered by the League for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (LDHH) and the Down Syndrome Association of Middle Tennessee (DSAMT).



BY MELISSA FORTSON

LDHH's Stepping Stones, a Summer day program for 8–14 year-olds who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, focuses on reading, writing, Deaf Culture, drama and extracurricular activities. DSAMT's My Life, My Choice, My Plan (MMM) provides young adults with Down syndrome the opportunity to have fun, learn, make friends, and gain independence. Both camps allow campers to meet peers who have similar disabilities; specialty camps also provide teaching opportunities specific to a particular disability or health condition.

Camp Smile, a day camp in Collierville, is a place for youth with developmental disabilities to enjoy arts, recreation, field trips, theme days, and more. This popular camp, offered by the Collierville Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Department, is representative of the many Summer opportunities offered by community parks and recreation departments. Cathy Rader, specialized skills supervisor with the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Parks and Recreation, recently spoke with a group of individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families about daily recreational activities available through the city's parks department, including sports, music, art, bowling, swimming, and other activities. Both the City of Chattanooga and Williamson County offer therapeutic recreation programs which provide leisure and recreation opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.

Schools and universities also offer ideas and opportunities for Summer recreation. As part of its Interdisciplinary Leadership Training Series, the Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities recently offered a session on "Summer Ideas and Fun." The Center also sponsors the All Days Are Happy Days Summer Camp, a week-long camp for children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

The Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities co-hosts several Summer programs, including camps for students with autism, developmental disabilities, or Down syndrome. The Center's third annual music camp for young adults with Williams syndrome focuses on social skills and independence

and allows campers to celebrate music by participating in a songwriting workshop, recording session, songwriter's night and a live performance on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry.

As the Summer camp season approaches, many families are beginning the search for recreational activities. From choosing what kind of camp is best—inclusive, specialty, art, outdoor adventure, science, etc.—to knowing what kinds of questions

to ask, there is much to consider. There are resources to help families find programs that will meet their needs. Please see the information provided below for good places to start looking!

Melissa Fortson is an information & referral specialist/program coordinator with Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, a joint project of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center UCEDD.



SUMMER PROGRAM RESOURCES

The following organizations provide general information regarding camps and people with disabilities as well as listings of specific Summer programs. There are additional opportunities not listed in these directories. Check with other parents, teachers, parks and recreation departments, religious organizations, or community groups to see what is available where you live.

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder provides information regarding camps with disability or specialty programs available.

Call 800-640-4636 or visit www.familypathfinder.org (click on "Recreation and Summer Camps").

Discover Camp is a resource for parents of children with disabilities selecting a camp for their child.

<http://ncaonline.org/discover/>

The Family Village Recreation and Leisure Center provides information regarding camps and adaptive recreational opportunities. <http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/> (click on "Recreation and Leisure").

The Junior League Family Resource Center at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital has an online Camp Directory, which provides information on Summer programs for children with chronic illnesses and disabilities. Many of the programs listed are in the Middle Tennessee region; national camps serving children with chronic conditions are included for some specific conditions. The Web site also includes tips on choosing the right camp for people of all abilities. Call 800-288-0391 or visit <http://www.vanderbiltchildrens.com> (click on "Family Resources").

The National Center on Accessibility promotes inclusive recreation opportunities for people of all abilities. <http://ncaonline.org/>

The National Dissemination Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY) offers a listing of campsites and programs around the nation that offer services and specialized Summer camp programs for children and youth with disabilities. <http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/genresc/camps.htm>

Contact information for programs mentioned in the article is listed in the next column.



Adventure Science Center

John Hawkins, camp coordinator

615-862-5117 or info@adventuresci.com

<http://www.adventuresci.com/>

Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities

901-448-6511 or 888-572-2249

<http://www.utmem.edu/bcdd/>

Camp Smile (Collierville Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Department)

Lisa Gaither, camp director

901-853-3225 or lgaither@ci.collierville.tn.us

<http://www.colliervilleparks.org/>

City of Chattanooga Therapeutic Recreation

Lizzy Hockinson, therapeutic recreation specialist

423.643.5716 or hockinson_l@mail.chattanooga.gov

<http://www.chattanooga.gov/>

Down Syndrome Association of Middle Tennessee

Sheila Moore, executive director

615-386-9002 or dsamt@bellsouth.net

<http://www.dsamt.org/>

League for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Brigette Ochoa, youth director

615-248-8828 (V/TTY) or bo@ldhh.org

<http://www.ldhh.org>

Metro Board of Parks and Recreation (Nashville)

Cathy Rader, Metro Parks Disabilities Program

615-862-8479 or cathy.rader@nashville.gov

<http://www.nashville.gov/parks/>

Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

Gretchen Herbert, recreation & art coordinator

615-322-8147 ext. 14 or gretchen.herbert@vanderbilt.edu

<http://www.kc.vanderbilt.edu>

Williamson County Parks and Recreation

Vicky Pitner, therapeutic administrator

615-790-5719 or vickyp@williamson-tn.org

<http://www.williamsoncounty-tn.gov>