

Camp Connection

Summer 2015



Tech camps popular, but so is the great outdoors

Tri-Valley offers varied assortment of summer fun

BY PLEASANTON WEEKLY STAFF

As parents consider summer camps for their children, they may become nostalgic for their own vacation days of yore.

But camps have evolved along with everything else in the world, and today kids explore technology, drama, sports, writing and more, as well as nature and the great outdoors.

From private camps to those offered by park districts and cities, the choice is large and varied.

"We've seen substantial growth, not just in the number of classes offered, but the variety of course offerings as well," said Sean Welch, marketing special-

ist for Pleasanton Community Services. "We offer more science and technology camps, a greater number of sports classes, and longer program hours for day camps."

"We're trying to keep up with the trends," Welch said.

Other cities in the area also offer summer camps, as does the YMCA and other nonprofit organizations.

Animal-loving kids might like camps at Valley Humane Society and the East Bay SPCA. Private camps include an emphasis on group sports, theater, horseback riding, golf and tennis, among others.

Nature camps are offered through

East Bay Regional Park District, and the Oakland Zoo has a science and nature camp for pre-kindergarten through high school as well as a multi-grade nature exploration class. Roughing It Summer Camps feature all-outdoor programs for campers from pre-kindergarten to 10th grade and offer free transportation.

Local groups also offer somewhat unique camps. Kidz Kraftz's programs tap into the interests of young fashion designers, and those who just want to learn to sew.

Other local camps are offering more academic enrichment programs. For example, Engage!, which holds its program at Harvest Park Middle School

in Pleasanton, is offering programs in mathematics, creative arts, music and technology. Courses range from computer animation and coding to creative problem-solving, Lego robotics and re-programming the world of Minecraft.

Early Learning Center has themes geared toward young writers. Building Kidz School, new to the Pleasanton community, offers academic and performing arts programs for the youngest campers — infants, preschoolers and kindergartners.

Camps are a traditional part of growing up, but each year the options for camps in this area are greater.

The time to explore all the opportunities is now. ■

Camp Connection

Can we change the culture of youth sports?

Preventable injuries sideline too many young athletes

Youth sports are — and should always be — a valuable experience, filled with challenges, competition and fun.

But preventable injuries sideline too many young athletes. In 2013, 1.24 million kids sustained a sports injury severe enough to go to the emergency room.

New research suggests that the current culture of sports may be leading to unnecessary injuries. A new report, "Changing the Culture of Youth Sports," published by Safe Kids Worldwide with the support of Johnson & Johnson, reveals an alarming number of young athletes are injured as a result of dirty play.

The survey of 1,000 young athletes, 1,000 coaches and 1,000 parents also found that young athletes are hiding injuries to stay in the game, and parents are pressuring coaches to play injured athletes.

Based on the results of the survey, Safe Kids recommends parents, coaches and players take three steps to change the culture in youth sports so kids can stay in the game.

1. Put an end to dirty play

One in four young athletes reported it is normal to commit hard fouls and play rough to "send a message" during a game.

This norm leads to a disturbing number of injuries: 33% of athletes report being hurt as the result of "dirty play" by an opponent.

Sports teach valuable lessons and should

be competitive and entertaining, but we must move away from a "winning at all costs" mentality that is actually detrimental to the health and development of young athletes.

2. Give coaches the training they need and want

One in four coaches reported they don't take any specific actions to prevent sports injuries. Less than half of coaches say they have received certification on how to prevent and recognize sports injuries.

More training for coaches could help ensure that they are well-versed in the proper techniques for top performance and injury prevention.

3. Teach young athletes to speak up when they are injured.

About 42% of players reported they have hidden or downplayed an injury during a game so they could keep playing.

The phrases "taking one for the team," "suck it up" and "playing through the pain" should be removed from the dialogue. At the end of the day, young players must feel it's OK to tell coaches, parents and other players that they've been hurt and it's time to sit it out.

"Changing the culture in sports isn't about limiting kids," says Kate Carr, president and CEO of Safe Kids Worldwide. "It's about creating an atmosphere where our young athletes can compete, have fun and reach



Sports should be played in an atmosphere that keeps kids active, strong and safe.

BPT

their full potential. Working together, we can keep our kids active, strong and safe so they can enjoy the sports they love for a lifetime."

To learn more about how parents, coaches

and young athletes can work together to prevent injuries, read the report at www.safekids.org.

—BPT

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Think it's too soon to start planning your child's summer? Think again

During the summer while school's out, kids are at greater risk for learning loss and weight gain unless they have a game plan that includes learning enrichment and physical activity.

Summer camps are a great way to ensure children continue to grow socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically, while learning skills that will serve them well in the coming school year and beyond. It's not too early to begin planning your summer camp options now.

Working with SEER, an independent research organization, the YMCA recently surveyed nearly 40,000 parents with children enrolled in its camp programs nationwide.

The survey revealed that 91% of parents said they agreed day camp programs helped their kids make new friends. In addition, 81% said they agreed the program helped their kids discover what they can achieve, while 86% agreed their child felt a sense of belonging at camp.

Taking time to research summer camp options is critical to finding the best fit for your child. Consider a camp program that offers learning, exploration and achievement to help make your child's summer the best ever. Here are some questions to ask when selecting a camp:

1. Does your child want to attend a day camp or a resident camp?

Typically, day camps are a child's first camp experience that prepares him or her for overnight camps later on, but there's no rule that says kids must start close to home.

It all depends on what you're looking for, and what's comfortable for your child. Most importantly, you want your child to have fun at camp.

2. What camp size is best?

Make sure your camp meets the recommended leader-to-participant ratio. For example, there should be a 1:10 ratio for camps catering to 8- to 10-year-olds.

Also, ask yourself how your child interacts with peers. Some kids enjoy large camps where they can make many friends, while

others do better in smaller groups, like a few dozen campers, where there's no fear of getting lost in the crowd.

3. Does the camp have qualified staff?

Selecting a camp requires trusting that the camp selects well-qualified young adults and trains them well to safely lead programs that provide valuable lessons for your child.

Learn about the staff and camp directors to be assured that the camp screens, carefully selects and trains their leaders. Many camps are accredited by the American Camp Association, which requires adherence to a wide range of safety practices.

4. Does your child want a general camp or a specialty camp?

Many organizations offer more classic programs that get back to nature with rustic cabins and a variety of outdoor activities. Some offer specialty programs with a single goal in mind, such as nature education, training for a sport, horseback riding or performing music.

Talk to your children about what type of camp interests them and would best provide their ideal summer experience. Traditional camps that offer a wide variety of outdoor programs can be very impactful, and provide kids with choices that they can make independently.

5. Does the camp encourage healthy eating and physical activity?

Healthy eating and physical activity (HEPA) standards have been adopted by summer day and resident camps across the county. Make sure your child's camp program offers plenty of health-conscious meals and snacks while providing plenty of chances for exercise.

When kids are out of school, they can face hurdles that prevent them from reaching their full potential, related to hunger, water safety, academics, safe spaces to play and health.

Children can "hop the gap" and achieve more by participating in summer camps providing a safe place to learn, stay healthy and build friendships. ■

—Brandpoint

Choosing a kid-friendly cell phone

Security, durability and affordability are important

From connecting with friends to playing interactive games, a mobile device presents endless entertainment to kids of every age.

With children getting their first cell phone when they are younger and younger, it's important to make sure they stay safe by investing in a kid-friendly phone and keeping tabs on their activity.

From ensuring there is fun content to using new applications that limit their exposure to undesirable content, there are many considerations to take into account when purchasing a phone for your child.

As you begin researching options, consider this advice from the experts:

Durability. When it comes to kids, durability is key. Look for phones that can stand up to daily use and invest in protection (such as covers and screen protectors) to save it from drops or spills.

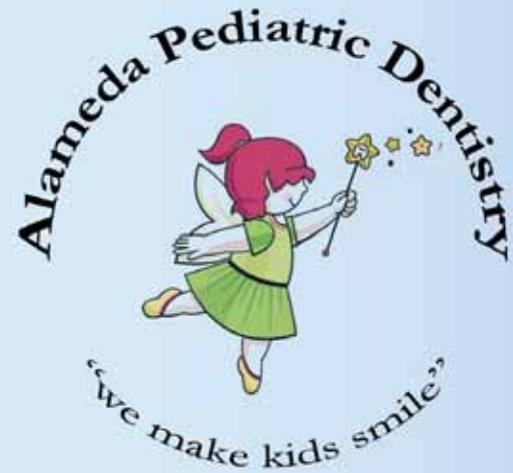
Add a few simple investments and save big on repair or replacement costs down the line.

Security. Look for a device that creates a safe smartphone experience for your child as well as monitors their usage. Some smartphones come with a one-year free trial of a parental control app, which allows you to monitor and manage your child's activities, location and phone usage.

Entertainment. Make sure the phone has the capability to download apps that provide plenty of quality entertainment. From games that inspire kids to draw pictures to puzzles and word games, your child will love the excitement at their fingertips.

Affordability. Seek a pre-paid or pay-as-you-go plan so you can manage the data your kids use, set limits on costs and avoid hidden fees that come with contract plans. ■

—Family Features



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If your child has an interest in nature or history, try adding educational elements into playtime, such as toys now available that combine dinosaurs and vehicles.

STATEPOINT

Encourage children to learn more about science and nature at playtime

Dinosaurs continue to be fascinating playmates

Have any budding scientists in your family? If your children are fascinated by nature, dinosaurs and other cool science subjects, you can help foster their interests by turbo charging their playtime to fit their favorite topics.

"Learning is not just for the classroom or a formal setting," said Dr. Lise Eliot, early childhood development expert. "Teachable moments happen naturally every day, and you can create some of your own, too."

Here are some great educational playtime ideas for your budding paleontologists and naturalists:

- Dino-mite makeover: Transform your child's bedroom or play area into a prehistoric retreat with dino clings on the walls, stencils and dinosaur bedding. Help your child identify the different dinosaurs on each.
- Field trip: Visit the dinosaur exhibit at a local museum. Some museums even have sleepovers where kids can sleep under the dinosaurs. Or take a trip to the zoo or aquarium.

It's the perfect way to expose children to a wide variety of animals that may be new to them.

Bring along a notebook and let kids sketch animals and make scientific observations about the animals' behaviors.

• Dinosaur-themed toys: "Toys can be so much more than a distraction," Eliot said. "Look for toys that let kids play creatively and engage in imaginative play." New innovative toys let kids act out prehistoric scenes, and some are available that combine dinosaurs and vehicles.

• Reading time: Foster a love of reading while encouraging kids' natural wonder by visiting your local library and exploring subjects like dinosaurs, earth science and astronomy. By locating books that pique your kids' interests, you can help develop a lifetime love of learning.

With a bit of creative parenting, you can maximize playtime, cultivate interests and encourage learning in one fell swoop. ■

—StatePoint

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