



## HAPPY CAMPERS

*Children learn independence, enjoy time on their own*

By DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

Summer camps offer more than meets the eye. Although roasting a perfect marshmallow is a good skill to have, the most important thing learned at camp is independence.

Going to camp means new experiences, getting away from the family and fending for oneself. In today's world, when parents keep a very close eye on their children, this independence takes on special importance.

Camps are about exploring, and this may be rare in young lives where activities are scripted and tightly scheduled. At camp, boys and girls learn that they can choose activities, make friends and do things on their own.

In "Homesick and Happy: How Time Away from Parents Can Help a Child Grow," psychologist Michael Thompson cites a study in which people were asked their happiest childhood memories. More than 80% shared a memory when their parents were not involved.

Thompson interpreted this to mean that children like to accomplish something on their own, without worrying about what their parents would think. Such moments also give them a feeling of accomplishment.

At first, some parents may find the thought of sending their little ones off to camp overwhelming, Thompson writes.

"But parents' first instinct — to shelter their

offspring above all else — is actually depriving kids of the major developmental milestones that occur through letting them go — and watching them come back transformed," he explains.

The world is a scary place for parents, although few would deny the importance of becoming independent. Summer camp is the perfect time and place for this as children grow without being under the watchful eyes of parents.

Children socialize differently at camp than at school. Learning differences aren't noted as at school, so everyone fits in. The energetic ones who might get in trouble in the classroom may discover they are leaders.

Parents report that children come back from

camp changed, with new emotional and social skills, such as being team members, and knowing how to assess risks and cope with hardships. They seem more open to new experiences, like sports they were encouraged to play at camp. And they do things like make their beds and take their plates to the sink without being asked.

Summer camps are even more important today because they get children away from technology. A lot of growing can be done when they leave behind distractions such as video games and smartphones as well as the pressures of their everyday lives.

Instead of using social media, kids learn

See **CAMPERS** on Page 15



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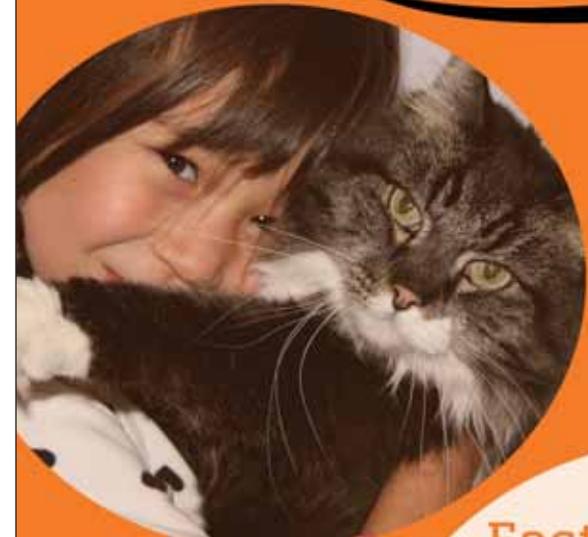
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## 5 MUST-SEE MOVIES

By JEREMY WALSH

Attending summer camps can help children and teens experience the great outdoors, grow a creative passion, meet new people and create lifelong memories.

At least that's what I've heard.

I never went to camp as a kid, so I don't really have first-hand experience — though I did spend most summers as a youngster playing sports, swimming or just running around at day care.

But I have seen my fair share of camp movies, and the exercise of creating a top-five list of must-sees in the genre walked that fine line between fun and exhausting.

While I enjoyed looking back on and researching camp movies I've seen, I struggled a bit with setting my ground rules (i.e., what should be considered a "camp movie").

The traditional context seemed pretty straightforward: a significant part of the movie involves kids traveling away from home to some sort of camp, usually during summertime.

How about expanding that to include day-long child care? 2003's "Daddy Day Care" was entertaining and among Eddie Murphy's more underrated comedies — maybe his best live-action work this century outside of "Dreamgirls."

And the smart aleck in me thought for a minute, "Hey, boot camp should count." Some stellar films have memorable boot camp sequences: "Full Metal Jacket," "Stripes," "Forrest Gump" and heck, even "Mulan."

Wait, should I consider any movie involving camping?

"The Blair Witch Project" forever influenced horror cinematography. This year's Academy Award Best Picture frontrunner, "The Revenant," featured wilderness living almost exclusively. Then again, so does darn near every great Western. "Harry Potter 4 and 7 have camping," my wife reminded me.

So, to save myself from continuing down that rabbit hole, I decided to focus on just the classic camp movie definition.

Here are my five must-see camp movies:

### "THE PARENT TRAP"

The 1961 Walt Disney production stars Hayley Mills as both identical twin sisters who don't meet for the first time until — you guessed it

— they happened to go to the same summer camp.

They figure out that when their mother and father got divorced, each parent took one twin. So, the girls switch lives to meet their other parent — and work to bring them back together.

Sure, the 1998 remake starring Lindsay Lohan is funny, but I'm sticking with the original. Can't beat Mills in her child-star heyday, and Maureen O'Hara and Brian Keith are perfect as the parents.

### "FRIDAY THE 13TH"

Again, go with the original — and probably best to ignore the sequels while you're at it.

The 1980 horror classic set the standard for a new generation of slasher films. It follows a group of teens trying to reopen a creepy, defunct summer camp haunted by the memory of Jason Voorhees, who reportedly drowned there as a boy years earlier.

As the counselors work to rehab the camp, the killings begin. And they don't stop 'til the end — OK, maybe they don't really ever stop, since the movie spawned 11 more installments in the series.

The original is the best, and it's a can't-miss if you enjoy a good horror flick.

### "ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES"

The 1993 sequel to director Barry Sonnenfeld's "The Addams Family" (one of my all-time childhood favorites) is uneven at times but saved largely by its camp sequences.

The children of the cooky Addams clan, Wednesday and Pugsley, are cast off to Camp Chippewa, where they're outcasts among the other, "more normal" kids.

achieve with parents involved in their lives everyday. This may be the first time a child makes friends who their parents don't know.

At camp, not only do children experience independence from their parents and from their gadgets, they also learn age-old camping skills that are useful throughout their lives — such as roasting that perfect marshmallow. ■



But they soon band with fellow fish out of water, and at the end of camp, they put on the most memorable (and fiery) "first Thanksgiving" play in movie history.

Christine Baranski and Peter MacNicol steal the show as the overzealous camp leaders.

### "HEAVYWEIGHTS"

Camp Hope is the setting for this 1995 coming-of-age comedy that follows young Gerry forced to attend a weight-loss camp.

There's not a lot of deep plot work here, but it's a great watch if you want something light, clever and heartwarming.

"Heavyweights" has some memorable moments/themes: the Blob, Lars, creative candy hiding places and an epic tournament where Camp Hope boys face off against more athletic peers.

But most of all, the movie has then-little-known Ben Stiller as the crazy camp founder, a relentless (and at times evil) fitness fiend who treats the boys unfairly but ultimately sees a hilarious downfall. Nice precursor to his "Dodgeball" character.

### "MOONRISE KINGDOM"

Writer/director Wes Anderson is an acquired taste (that's the polite way to say it, right?), but he and co-writer Roman Coppola got this one right.

The 2012 film centers on a 12-year-old boy who runs away from Camp Ivanhoe to meet his pen

pal love, a girl who lives on the island where the camp is located. The movie follows the young couple and the adults in their lives trying to find them.

The funny, versatile adult ensemble cast includes Bruce Willis, Bill Murray and Frances McDormand, to name a few. Not a traditional comedy, but an engaging ride.

### HONORABLE MENTIONS:

"Ernest Goes to Camp" (1987) is the best of the comedic film series featuring the late Jim Varney as the bumbling Ernest P. Worrell.

"But I'm a Cheerleader" (1999) takes a biting, satirical look at the notion of conversion therapy, following a high school cheerleader, portrayed by Natasha Lyonne, whose family sends her to a conversion camp in an attempt to "cure" her of being lesbian. (Doesn't work.)

And there's "It Takes Two," the best of the Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen features. In this 1995 movie, the real-life twins play identical strangers — one a rich daughter and the other an orphan — who conspire to help the former's father and the latter's social worker fall in love.

"What about 'Meatballs?'" you might ask. The 1979 comedy starring Bill Murray just didn't do it for me. The characters weren't relatable, the subplots were boring and the laughs weren't there consistently enough.

Admittedly, I haven't seen every camp movie, and there are a couple well-regarded ones to top that list: the raunchy cult comedy "Wet Hot American Summer" (2001) and "Camp," a 2003 indie film set at a performing arts camp.

I'll have to add those to our Netflix queue. ■  
Editor's note: Associate editor Jeremy Walsh earned a minor in cinema studies while completing his bachelor's degree in journalism at American University in Washington, D.C.



## CAMPERS

Continued from Page 14

to communicate directly, talking to their new friends face to face. Emojis don't exist unless they are sketched by hand or toed in the dirt.

Even day camps can teach children to be independent, something that may be hard to

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