

Specialized summer camps engage children

While for parents, summer camp may bring to mind days filled with scavenger hunts and popsicle-stick art, today's kids have a lot more sophisticated summertime options. Old-fashioned summer camps are still part of the mix, but a whole host of specialized camps now give children the chance to concentrate a single area – i.e., arts, sports or music – for a few weeks each summer. Below is a sampling of camps offered throughout the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Art

For instance, Summer Art Camp at The Walters (www.thewalters.org) goes well beyond the typical camp arts and crafts. With 28,000 pieces in The Walters' collection to inspire kids' artistic visions, the Mount Vernon museum's campers not only *make* art but they observe, analyze and immerse themselves in art.

Luc Reneaux, 13, has attended The Walters summer camp for four years. One of his favorite projects from camp was making a nearly life-sized, papier-mâché person.

But what he really likes about camp is the artistic freedom. "It's not really like a strict art class. You have the freedom to make what you like," he says. "They give you freedom, but they also help you draw things better."

Offered weekly from July 5-29, camp is weekly full- and half-day sessions for kids entering grades one through five and full day only for kids in grades six through 12. The non-member prices for grades first through fifth are \$170 (half day) and \$320 (full day) and for grades six to 12, it is \$280. However, members receive a significant discount.

Outdoors/Nature

But kids do still get in touch with nature at camp. The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore lets kids in grades three through eight experience a "Day in the Life of a Zookeeper Camp," learning about habitats and animal care. However, eighth- and ninth-graders

can delve deeper into issues such as the role of the modern zoo and endangered species in the “Animal Research and Conservation Camp.”

The zoo offers one session for a different age group each week from June 27-August 12. Cost for non-members is \$410 per week and \$345 for members.

For a more rugged but still ecologically focused camp, Ultimate Water Sports in Gunpowder Fall State Park (www.ultimatewatersports.com) offers the “Chesapeake Bay Eco-Challenge Camp” in addition to its more sports-oriented camps. Kids, ages 10-14, explore wetlands, marshes, water trails and beaches of the upper Chesapeake watershed in kayaks. Weekly sessions run June 20-July 29 and cost \$395 per week.

Sports

Sports camps run the gamut. There’s the all-around athletics of Gerstung, where camp emphasizes determination, fair play and creativity as it teaches everything from archery and aquatics to tennis and gymnastics.

In Baltimore County off Falls Road, Gerstung’s camp sessions run all summer (June 1-Aug. 26) for kids 3-and-a-half to 18. The first full-day week of camp is \$395 and half-day is \$250. Small discounts for additional weeks apply.

But then there are the more specialized sports camps. Take, for example, Ripken Baseball Camps (ripkencamps.com) in Aberdeen. Boys and girls ages 7-18 get position-specific training then play an afternoon of games. Both Cal Jr. and Cal Sr. provide instruction and encouragement for the kids.

Running July 3-Aug. 12, Ripken Baseball Camps runs programs for various ages and skill levels. Overnight camp cost about \$1,500 a week, while day camp sessions run from about \$350-\$1,000, depending on the age and skill level of the camper. Spring Break camps starting April 19 are available too.

Music/Performance

Gone are the days when silly camp skits and campfire songs were the musical and performance high points of summer camp.

Budding rock stars (ages 8-15) write and perform their own music at the DayJams Summer Camp (www.dayjams.com) on the campus of Roland Park Country School. Only two, one-week sessions (July 11-22) are available this summer. Cost is \$600 per week.

For the would-be actor in the family, Everyman Theatre offers intensive three-week sessions for middle school and high school students. Kids learn about acting, movement and rehearsal techniques and participate in theater games, improv and vocal exercises, all of which culminate in a final performance.

Middle school session runs June 27-July 1 and costs \$525 for all three weeks, and high school session is July 18 -Aug. 5 for \$575.