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Connecting Big Plans' Parents to their Communities

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The Ins & Outs of Summer Camp

A Parent's Guide to Choosing the Perfect Residential Camp for Your Child

Even though we have barely begun to enjoy spring in Calgary, soon enough, we will all be enjoying the freedom of summer. For those of you thinking about sending your child (ren) to summer camp, you may find this guide, written by the Alberta Camping Association, useful.

Types of Camps

Day camps - Day camps operate for periods of one to eight weeks, providing opportunities for children to enjoy a camping experience during the day while sleeping at home. This type of camp may be viewed as an introductory stage to camping at a high comfort level.

Residential camps - Residential camps operate for periods of one to eight weeks, offering many different landscapes and experiences. The activities offered, the style of accommodations, and the camp's philosophy vary with each camp.

Religiously affiliated camps - These camps operate programs as an extension of their community work. In some cases, religious studies form a portion of the program, while in other cases it may simply represent the source of staff commitment and the philosophy of the programs.

Agency sponsored camps - A wide variety of social service and publicly funded organizations maintain a camping program as an extension of the service they offer the community.

Special-needs camps - While most camps can accommodate certain special needs, parents of campers with physical, mental, developmental, or emotional needs are advised to investigate those camps which are designated to serve those particular needs.

Municipality camps - Many municipalities operate a camping program within their recreational program. Typically, these programs are of a day camp nature on sites in the community.

Private camps - The term 'private' refers to the ownership of the camp rather than the clientele. The philosophy, staffing, program decisions, and the site development are often closely associated with the owner/operator's leadership style.



Find out steps in choosing a residential summer camp next page . . .



This Issue:

<i>The Ins & Outs of Summer Camp</i> ...	Page 1
<i>City of Calgary Summer Fun</i>	Page 2
<i>Families Matter LEAP Program</i> ...	Page 3
<i>Dads Programming</i>	Page 3
<i>Free Hike for Health</i>	Page 3
<i>Pavement Painting</i>	Page 3
<i>Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary- Magic Carpet Ride</i>	Page 4



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Steps to choosing a perfect residential camp

Discover the Alberta Camping Association. Visit albertacamping.com. Read about the organization which has, as its mandate, the provision of an assurance of quality to the public through its program of accreditation and guidelines for operations.

Complete the 'Camper's Worksheet' with your camper. This will ensure that both you and your camper are satisfied with the camp you choose.

Contact the Camp Office. Ask about session lengths, starting dates, and what is included in the fee. See 'Questions for the Camp Director'.

Ask for literature. Request to receive camp literature. It will include answers to many questions and supply the necessary application forms. Make sure you understand the registration and cancellation policies.

Check references. If you are uncertain about the camp, you might want to talk to others who have attended. Measure the camp against the 'checklist for choosing a camp'. This list will ensure that the camp is in line with the ACA's commitment to providing a safe and quality camping environment for your child.

Register with the camp of your choice. There should be regular contact from this moment on. You should receive a warm welcome or confirmation package, including confirmation of dates, prices, equipment, cancellation policies, and other pre & post camp information.

Checklist for choosing a residential camp:

- Health and Safety Procedures – in place
- Health and Safety Personnel – on-site
- Accident and Emergency Procedures – well defined and understood
- The Director – accessible and helpful
- Living Space – clean and comfortable
- Dining Facility – clean and adequate
- Camp Program – varied and balanced
- Social setting – wholesome and suitable
- Staff – experienced, trained, and caring
- Supervision – constant and caring
- Camp Fee – clearly defined
- Parent's Role – understood and agreeable
- Special needs – information communicated
- References Checked – ask other parents
- Accredited – by the ACA

Questions parents should ask the camp director:

What is your background in camping? The ACA recommends that the Camp Director have eight to 10 years of camping experience as a staff member, four to five of which should be in supervisory position.

What is your camp's philosophy? Whether it is canoeing or computers, the activities should be vehicles to the more fundamental purpose of providing a caring community in which your child can grow and develop.

What is your ratio of campers to staff? This ratio varies with age levels, special needs, and type of activity. Confirm that it suits your expectations. What are the ages of your counsellors?

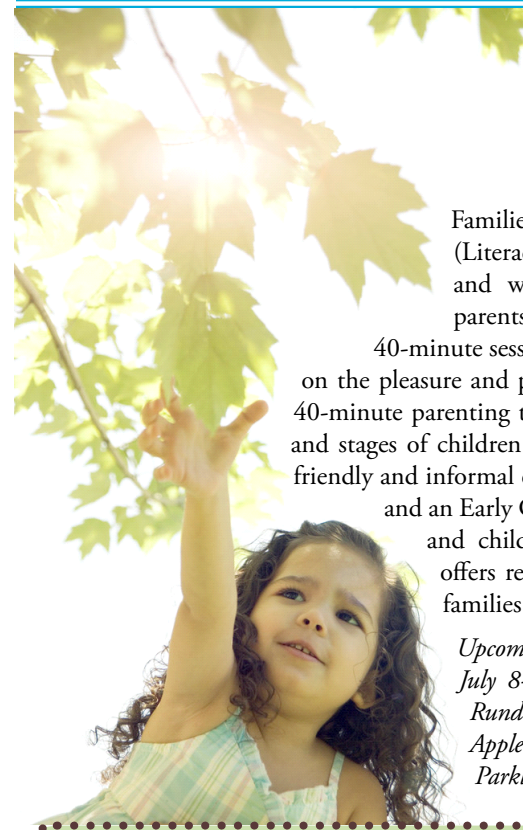
The ACA recommends that counsellors be a minimum age of 17. **Ask about training, rate of staff turnover, and experience of senior staff.**

What percentage of campers return every year? While every camp is clearly not suited to every person, a significant number of returning campers usually indicates a high level of camper satisfaction.

What provisions are made for campers with special needs? All children have special needs. Determine if the camp is able to address your unique circumstance.

How will my child get to and from camp? Does the camp offer a bus? Are the buses supervised by the camp staff? Is your camp accredited by the ACA? If not, why not?

For more information, visit the Alberta Camping Association's website at albertacamping.com. Reprinted with permission by Alberta Camping Association



L.E.A.P. (Literacy, Education, Attachment and Play)

Families Matter is pleased to present the L.E.A.P. (Literacy, Education, Attachment and Play) program and will be at selected sites over the summer for parents and children ages 0-5 years. LEAP consists of a 40-minute session of Parent Child Mother Goose which focuses on the pleasure and power of using rhymes and songs, followed by a 40-minute parenting topic delivered informally and based on the ages and stages of children two to six. This free program is facilitated in a friendly and informal environment by one Family Life Parent Educator and an Early Childhood Educator. In addition to the parenting and child development specialists, Families Matter also offers resources and referrals to other professionals for a families unique needs and questions.

Upcoming dates include: July 2-5 *Prairie Winds and Citadel*; July 8-12 *McKenzie Towne and Valleyridge*; July 15-19 *Rundle and Royal Oak*; July 22-26 *Marlborough Park and Applewood*; August 6-9 *Temple and Tuscany*; August 12-16 *Parkland and Ranchlands*; and August 19-23 *Thornccliffe*.

ATTENTION DADS There are programs for you too!

LEAP for Dads (and their children age 0-6)

Dads, make Saturday morning a fun adventure for your children with YOU! Come play with us in our resource centre filled with activities, games, toys and paints. Early Childhood Staff will be on site to answer any questions your family may have and to assist you with resources.

When: Saturdays, June 1, 8, 15, 22

Time: 10:00 to Noon

Cost: \$20.00—for the ENTIRE month

Programs for Dads are located at: Trans Canada Centre , 440 52nd St. N.E. Registration required. Call 403 - 205 - 5178 to register or on line at www.familiesmatter.ca

TERRIFIC TODDLERS just for Dads!

Yes toddlers are challenging but they are also terrific! This four week course aims to increase confidence and skills in parenting toddlers, leading to a strong, healthy, life-long relationship. This program is facilitated by a male early childhood educator. This program addresses topics for discussion with strategies you can use: Positive and Respectful Discipline; Healthy Self-Esteem; Ages and Stages; and Power Struggles. Join us for coffee and a welcoming environment to learn more and discuss your parenting questions.

When: Monday, June 3, 10, 17, 24

Time: 7:00—9:00 p.m.

Cost: \$125 (fee programs are always subject to subsidy on a sliding scale as Families Matter believes that cost shouldn't be a barrier to participation in their programs)



FREE HIKE FOR HEALTH

Calgarians are invited to combine physical fitness with nature exploration! Journey to every quadrant of the city for the chance to explore a different park each day. Guided walks will be combined with interactive activities led by City of Calgary staff.

WHERE: Prairie Winds Park (N.E.), Griffith Woods (N.W.), Carburn Park (S.E.) and Bowmont Park (S.W.)

AGE: All Ages

WHEN: Jun 13-16 Th-Su (various times)

FREE DROP-IN

For more information, contact 311 or visit calgary.ca/parks.

Pavement Painting

On a dry, warm day give your child a plastic bucket of water, one or two paintbrushes, and an old sponge. Find a safe driveway, wooden deck, cement wall, or stretch of pavement, and let her paint large pictures or patterns with the water onto the cement or wood surface. Pictures will dry and disappear, exciting your child with endless possibilities. Step into the bucket to make footprints, splash or drip water off fingertips. Use the sponges to press onto the hard surface or squeeze water into patterns.



Picture from - <http://tatschool.shannons.org/sidewalk-water-painting>

Activity re-printed with permission of Family Education Network which can be found online at www.familyeducation.com.

Adventure Together
summer 2013

The City of Calgary Community & Neighbourhood Services is extremely pleased to present an opportunity to Adventure Together with us this summer.

We have a wide variety of exciting programs and special events that cater to children, youth and families, all led by qualified City staff. Join us all summer and experience games, crafts, theatre, swimming, skateboarding and in-line skating.

Many of our programs are free so all Calgarians can experience the benefits of community recreation.

If you would like further information on any of the programs or require assistance on finding a location, contact 311 or visit our website at calgary.ca/cns.

Welcome!

Children's programs

Park n' Play and Stay n' Play are brought to you by The City of Calgary Community & Neighbourhood Services in partnership with your local community association.

Park n' Play
For ages six to 12 | 10 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Park n' Play is a free outdoor drop-in program. Join in the fun with games, crafts and other activities. Children will be divided into two age groups where possible (ages six to eight and nine to 12) with age appropriate activities planned. If participant numbers are low, children will remain together as one large group. **FREE**

Stay n' Play
For ages three to five | 10 a.m. – noon
Stay n' Play is a free outdoor drop-in program. Join in the fun with games, crafts and other activities. Children must be accompanied by an adult/guardian who joins in the fun. **FREE**

PLEASE NOTE:

- Don't forget your hat, lunch, appropriate footwear, sunscreen, bug spray and plenty of water.
- Registration with City leaders is required on site each day.
- These programs are open to individuals and families only.
- All programs may be cancelled due to inclement weather.

Free Summer Fun in the City!

Are you looking for some free summer fun with your preschoolers? Then you will want to check out the City of Calgary's Stay n' Play program in your area. Just visit the www.calgary.ca/cns for more details and dates. In addition, you may also want to attend one of the Free Summer Kickoffs. You will have an afternoon out with your kids and learn about programs happening across Calgary this summer. At the kickoff you will meet the summer staff, get your questions answered, and experience some of the activities that will be going on all summer long.

North Area Summer Kickoff - Saturday, June 22 1 – 4 p.m.
Shouldice Activity Centre - 5303 Bowness Rd. N.W.

East Area Summer Kickoff - Sunday, June 23 noon – 3 p.m.
Prairie Winds Park - 223 Castleridge Blvd. N.E.

South Area Summer Kickoff - Thursday, June 20 6 – 8 p.m.
McKenzie Towne - 225 Prestwick Ave. S.E.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary Magic Carpet Ride Program

Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary is committed to providing a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life. One of the ways this is accomplished is through specific programming such as “Magic Carpet Ride”.

At first glance, the Magic Carpet Ride program seems to be about joining children and literacy; however, the connections made between parent and child are much deeper.

Magic Carpet Ride is facilitated by team members at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary’s Falconridge Club, which is funded by FCSS. In this program, children are exposed to numerous literacy activities. The best part is that while the children (ages 0-5) are learning, so are their parents.

Together the families meet on a weekly basis and spend time together reading, singing, rhyming and playing games. Research shows early literacy development is important to the success of children in their education. Furthermore, children whose parents were a part of their education gained even further successes. Since the program is provided for free to participants, there are reduced barriers to family participation and the program provides a perfect opportunity to enhance the overall relationship between parent and child.

At first, some of the parents were quiet and sat with their child during the activities. It wasn’t long, however, before the parents were singing along and participating in the games with enthusiasm. The goal to get parents involved in their children’s development was definitely achieved.

The program facilitators noticed the parents became, not only involved with their

child, but involved with each other. The common bond of helping their children learn created a sense of community for the parents.

For example, one mother who was partially blind was able to put her fears to rest that her six-month-old baby might not have fine motor skills. In talking to other parents and being directed to other resources by the program staff, the mother was able to gain more information about her child’s development.



**Boys & Girls Clubs
of Calgary**

A good place to be

Another mother couldn’t wait to bring her toddler to Magic Carpet Ride each week. She said her son was a very picky eater and not eating very well. For some reason, being able to interact and watch other children inspired the toddler to eat more. The toddler ate foods he normally wouldn’t eat and ate more than he did at home, the mom reported. The socialization aspect of the program helped the mother to encourage her son to eat. She was assured by other parents that she wasn’t alone.

Magic Carpet Ride also allowed for friendships to blossom outside of the program. Two of the families who met through Magic Carpet Ride began sharing children’s events and activity ideas that were free around Calgary. After sharing, they ended up seeing each other at the events and made plans to attend the next opportunity together.

As the Magic Carpet Ride offers a place for parents and children to learn together, program staff noticed parents were actively taking

books out from the library and sharing stories of experiences happening at home, such as children learning English, increased motor skills and an increased enthusiasm for spending time together doing activities like reading.

In addition, as the parents became more comfortable with the program and one another, changes in their and their children’s social behaviours increased.

Through gathering parent feedback about the Magic Carpet Ride, Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary learned about the needs of the families and their children. Parents asked for more free-play time because it allows for more socialization. Program staff altered the program to include an additional 15-minute segment of free time.

It was evident from the high attendance rate that Magic Carpet Ride was popular. Parents gave great feedback on what they liked and were thankful for various aspects of the program.

Children who participated in the program might not have had the words – due to language and age – to express how they enjoyed the program, but their parent’s high praises were enough to let our agency know the program was a hit!

Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary current Magic Carpet Ride Program runs until June 21 from 10:15am to 11:30am at the Saddletown Library (7556 Falconridge Drive NE - inside the Genesis Centre). Please note, there will be no program on Friday, May 24th.

Since this is a free drop-in program, families can register at any point. There is a one-time registration form that each family will need to fill out during their first visit. If you are interested in this program, please go to the Saddletowne Library to “register”, or contact the library through their main line - 403-260-2600.

