



# Earthworks Summer Camp

2024 Parent Handbook

## Who We Are:

EarthWorks is a youth development program offered by The Center for Youth that focuses on 21st Century Skills, experiential learning, STEAM and environmental enrichment, and personal wellness. By partnering with community leaders and educators we develop programs that build healthy, lasting, bonds between land and community.

Environmental science, forestry, and education are at the heart of what we do. Earthworks offer the skills and experience to facilitate safe, nature-based programs among diverse groups while helping them to develop skills and experiences that connect youth with their world and each other.

Earthworks staff is highly trained, diversely practiced, individuals with over 20 years of combined experience developing environmental and educational programs. They guide students through the natural world to educate, inspire, and empower youth by allowing them to develop connections with themselves and their world through meaningful experiences.

## Our Approach

Earthworks used a combined approach to education that includes ideas and methods from *Coyote's Guide to Connecting With Nature*, Project WET, and Project WILD along with many other resources to develop our unique Summer Camp programming.

While the purpose of our Summer Camp is to immerse youth in the natural world and teach valuable survival skills, the bulk of our day consists of unstructured play. This is because we understand that curiosity is oftentimes the main driving force behind a child's learning process. More importantly, we do not expect our Campers to sit still for long! That being said, we incorporate movement, purposeful game-play, and unstructured free play time into the plans for each day of camp. Our primary goal is to ensure that our summer camps are as fun, engaging, and beneficial to all students within a session.



Because of this, we specifically design our programming to be age-specific and our daily plans target the developmental needs of the assigned age group. For more information on the age groups, see below!

## About Our Summer Camps

Committed to immersing children in nature, our summer camp encompasses The American Camp Association pillars for a valuable and educational summer experience. Our nature guides encourage children to creatively explore the natural world, nurturing the development of resiliency and self-confidence through consistent hands-on skill practice. Each program is age-appropriate, with specialized outdoor skill practice aimed at improving self-confidence and developing positive social relationships.

Our summer camps provide a safe and structured space for children to dictate their learning while becoming aware of the natural world. Children are encouraged to embrace their curiosity, appreciate the natural world and explore the landscape. Expect your child to jump, crawl, run, hide and play in this fun-filled camp experience!

### When

We understand the importance of summer planning for families so we always try to stay consistent with the dates for our summer camps. Typically, our summer camp starts the second week of July, or, the week following July 4th and they run until the third week of August. All class days run from 8:30–2:30 pm Monday-Friday. We like to allow each age group to explore and play in the company of their peers, which is why we divide our six weeks of summer camp into three 2-week sessions, organized by age group. For more on our age groups, see below!

### Where

Summer adventure sessions are held at the beautiful Helmer Nature Center in Irondequoit.

**Address:**

154 Pinegrove Ave.  
Irondequoit, NY 14617

## Age Groups

Each age group runs for two weeks during July and August. Parents have the option to sign their child up for one week, or both! Please note, each section is designed for that specific age group. To make sure everyone gets the best experience, we will not allow students into a section outside of their age range.



### **Neat Nature 5-7 years old**

Neat Nature provides space for children to enjoy safe unstructured wilderness play, where they can run free and explore nature. Children will be encouraged to focus on the plants beneath their feet, the trees above their heads, and the clues in the forest! Neat Nature is designed to increase children's awareness levels, encourage hands-on skill practice through working in small groups and most of all explore at their own pace.

For the benefit of the group and the individual student, we want to be sure that our new enrollees can feel successful in our programs, in which they will need to meet many of their personal needs autonomously and exercise personal responsibility to attend. Your child is ready to enroll in Neat Nature Summer Camp when they can meet all of the following criteria:

- Carry their backpack and other belongings independently
- Open all lunch and snack containers and wrappers independently
- Attend to their clothing independently (tying, zipping, buckling, adjusting layers, etc.)
- Keep track of their water bottle and food and eat and drink, as needed
- Use the restroom independently
- Apply sunscreen and insect repellent independently, as needed
- Remain with our group while in our camp area and maintain a reasonable pace with our group while on hikes and walks
- Participate in and understand the importance of Leave-No-Trace Carry-In and Carry-Out practices

### **Running Wild** **8-11 years old**

Designed to balance curiosity, adventure, and hands-on skill practice; Running Wild taps into our need to experience the natural world. Through structured skill practice and unstructured wilderness play, children will be encouraged to run, jump, build, create and work together. Expect your child to create survival shelters, be taught safe fire practices, engage in outdoor cooking, join daily navigation hikes, and most of all explore and get dirty! Running Wild will focus on building a foundation of survival techniques while allowing children to naturally experience the wilderness at their comfort level.

Running Wild is a unique survival skill summer camp that challenges students to think beyond the everyday. Campers will learn to think independently before reacting and making smart choices while being challenged. Our Forest Guides



focus on challenging students to develop life skills such as patience, respect, resiliency, and teamwork while mastering:

- Outdoor cooking and safety
- Fire building (with friction)
- Survival shelter building
- Wild sourcing of food and medicine
- Safety, and wildcrafting!

### **Nature Leaders**

**12-15 years old**

Could you have survived without shelter, food, or water thousands of years ago? This is the central focus of Nature Leaders, as young adults are challenged to reach beyond what is comfortable and typical; allowing them the opportunity for specialized skill practice. Expect your child to be taught and practice knife and hatchet techniques, learn practical fire skills, and understand our relationship with the natural world.

Nature Leaders is a unique survival skill summer camp that challenges students to think beyond the everyday. Presented as an expansion upon our Running Wild camp, campers will learn to think independently before reacting and making smart choices while being challenged. Our Forest Guides focus on challenging students to develop life skills such as patience, respect, resiliency, and teamwork while mastering:

- Outdoor cooking and safety
- Fire building (with friction)
- Survival shelter building
- Wild sourcing of food and medicine
- Safety, and wildcrafting!



## Siblings

While we try to be understanding of family schedules and the difficulties that can arise from scheduling two separate summer camp sessions for siblings of different ages, we ask that parents adhere to the age restrictions of each group. Our primary goal is to ensure that our summer camps are as fun, engaging, and beneficial to all students within a session. Because of this, we specifically design our programming to be age-specific and our daily plans target the developmental needs of the assigned age group. We appreciate your understanding.

## What to Expect

Program drop-off begins at 8:15 am and pick-up runs until 2:30 pm. If you plan to run late for either pick up or drop off, please call, text or email us ahead of time to let us know. Parents will be expected to check in with CFY-Earthworks Instructors to verbally sign children in and out each day.

Upon drop-off, the adventure begins! Students will be encouraged to jump into a fun game and explore the area. Once everyone in the class has arrived, we will promptly head into the woods to be immersed in nature for as much time as possible. Parents play an important role by dropping off their children with confidence, supporting effective communication between teachers and their children, supporting their experiences in Summer Camp with a positive attitude acknowledging their joys, as well as their challenges.



## Packing List/What to Leave Home

Earthworks Summer Camps are focused on complete immersion and adventure in the outdoors. We are proud to say that this is one of the key reasons why kids love our programs – the goal is to be challenged, get dirty and learn with the freedom to explore! Given these goals, there are few, if any times that class will be offered in an indoor setting. So, cancellations are only reserved for emergencies and/or very harsh weather conditions.

Please understand that camp runs for 6 hours and while we know that children are very resilient and full of energy, it is also good to know that they have the necessary items to keep them energized, happy and healthy if they need them. We will be checking in with parents before each day begins to ensure that everyone is prepared. Those who are not able to carry their bags or are missing items will be asked to remain with their parents until their clothing and day pack are complete.

Please bring the following items to every session:

- ❖ Backpack
- ❖ A *full* reusable water bottle
- ❖ Multiple snacks
- ❖ Lunch
- ❖ A small journal and pencil/pen for writing



## What to Wear

We ask that parents make sure kids have dressed appropriately for seasonal weather and the environment. As you know, "there is no bad weather, just bad preparedness, and clothing". For all outdoor classes in warm/muggy weather, light fabrics with closed-toed footwear will be especially important to keep you cool and dry. Please note that there are environmental hazards throughout the grounds such as stinging nettle and poison ivy. Because of this, we ask that students come wearing either long pants (synthetic fabrics recommended) and/or high socks that cover the ankle. Below is our recommended guide for what to wear for each of our campers:

- ❖ Head:
  - Hat or a bandana
- ❖ Torso:
  - Breathable base layer
  - Rain Coat(if rain is expected)
- ❖ Legs:
  - Pants or shorts that are not cotton
- ❖ Feet:
  - Sturdy footwear (hikers)
  - Socks that will cover the ankle
  - Waterproof shoes(optional)
    - There is a pond on-site and many of the students enjoy spending hours trying to catch frogs or explore the water's edge

## Bug and Sun Protection

NOTE: It is very important to do a thorough tick check after Forest School! Removing a tick early and safely is a great defense against tick-borne illness. Always save the tick in a zip-lock bag to have for testing if necessary.

A brimmed hat is one of the best defenses against the sun and buzzing bugs! Consider both the child and the environment when deciding on insect deterrents. Those containing pyrethrins or DEET are highly effective, but should never be used on children's skin. Note that long-lasting pyrethrins, sprayed on boots and pants, can be just as effective, but can also be

hazardous to aquatic life if freshly sprayed (for example, that morning). Please read the cautionary labels. Many safe and natural bug sprays are available! Ask us for suggestions if you are unsure!

Another great way to stay protected is with clothing. Keeping covered with long sleeves, long pants (and boots or socks over pants), and a wide-brim hat, are very safe and effective methods for dealing with both sun and bugs! On warmer days, we recommend moisture-wicking synthetic fabrics or linen as the best option for coverage while staying cool.

## What to Leave at Home

- ❖ **Electronics:** We ask that kids not bring electronics or toys as they can be very distracting (phones can be kept packed away in bags) and take away from the “wild” feeling of our time outside.
- ❖ **Tools:** Earthworks will have tools and supplies each day, so it is not necessary to have your children bring their own unless you expressly confirm this with your instructors.
- ❖ **Sharps:** Please do NOT send potentially hazardous objects. On occasion, tools may be appropriate but must be shown to a teacher and used only in the Cutting Circle area. Always check with an instructor before sending a tool out into the woods with your child.
- ❖ **Toys:** Bringing toys from home is discouraged. Personal toys can get dirty and broken and may cause problems when others want to play with them. Better yet—if your child would like to bring a doll, truck, or horse they can let us know and we could try making one out of natural materials. The forest holds cordage materials, acorns, wood, sticks (there are hundreds of things to do with a stick!), mud, bark, leaves and so many things for your child to play with! Encourage your child that their beloved toy will be waiting when they get home, but they can create a toy at Forest School.

## Health and Medical

### Medications

We ask that if your child has an allergy, medical condition, or illness that requires medication or special attention please notify us ahead of time so our guides can be informed and prepared. If there are medications that need to be administered by an adult, please make sure they are handed directly to our guides before the start of the program. If your child is sick or injured, they must be cleared by a doctor before attending the program.

## **First Aid**

Our instructors have first aid training and carry first aid kits at all times, along with each child's medical information. If your child requires medication and you cannot provide it before the day begins, let us know so that special arrangements can be made.

Scraped knees, nicks, and bumps are cared for at the camp. Our approach is that little events are part of the learning process. All minor injuries are met with assurance and cleanliness, and encouragement with your child's ability to have confidence in themselves. Staff will discuss any minor injuries with parents at the end of the day. Any injury involving a bump on the head or one of any other concerns will initiate a call home from one of your instructors. Such a call home does not deem an emergency, or that a child needs an immediate pick-up, but that you, the parent, have time to make any decisions regarding care before you arrive for pick-up.

## **Sickness**

Our Summer Camp days can be physically demanding for little ones. Please be aware when deciding if your child is well enough to attend, that a child unable to participate fully due to illness will have a negative experience and requires a greater share of instructor time and attention. We, unfortunately, do not have the staff resources to nurse a sick child. If your child becomes unwell we will keep him or her comfortable and call you to come to pick him or her up.

## **Cancellations**

If the weather does take a turn for the worse, and driving conditions are bad, we will inform folks of class cancellations or delays no later than one hour before the camp starts. If for some reason a camp day is canceled due to weather or an unpredictable event, we will do our best to reschedule.