

Parents of Campers, Start Your Schedules



Belvoir Terrace campers at a Camp Greylock beach social last year.
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Because it is an event that utterly shakes up the social lives of the parents regularly covered in this column, it is my duty to report that today is the start of sleep-away camp season.

This morning, hundreds of girls and boys will say goodbye to their doormen, pets, parents, and cell phones for the summer. By nightfall, they'll be singing songs around a campfire, while their parents head to the Hamptons in their empty SUVs, having sent the nanny on vacation.

New Yorkers love sending their children to camp. In fact, 60% to 70% of children attending the 3500 sleep away camps in the Northeast are from the New York metropolitan area, the executive director of the National Camp Association, **Jeff Solomon**, said.

For city families, a summer stint in the wilderness provides critical life lessons.

"It's socialization in a way that can't happen in the real world. The kids from New York have tons of pressure and homework. At camp, they can talk and hang out. They have to live with others, share with others, and listen to others," the director of **Camp Greylock** in Becket, Mass., **Michael Marcus**, said.

"At camp, he becomes more independent. He has to make his bed, hang up his clothes," the director of the International Pre-School on East 85th Street, **Mona Green**, said of her 14-year-old son, **Shawn**, who is entering his last year at Camp Greylock.

Not that the lessons will stick: "Within two weeks, the floor will be covered in clothes again," Mrs. Green said.

Samantha Eley, 14, who today will travel to a girl's arts camp, Belvoir Terrace in Lenox, Mass., is ready to leave town.

"I've been in New York the entire school year. I enjoy it, but it's good to get out of the city," Miss Eley said yesterday. "It's not as hot in the Berkshires, and there's no traffic."

Miss Eley is looking forward to

he credits to the baseball instruction at Camp Greylock.

Camp Greylock offers a seven-week traditional sports program for boys with instruction in fencing, lacrosse, golf, baseball, archery, and boating, among other activities. The camp has so far avoided some trendier sports such as skateboarding.

Mr. Marcus said the environment at Camp Greylock is less competitive than what children encounter in the school year. "It's not one game a week. There are so many games in the summer, each one is no big deal. And no one is watching," he said.

At the girl's camp, **Belvoir Terrace**, children design their own schedules with classes in dance, theater, music, painting, even fashion design. Many of the instructors are from New York, such as former New York City Ballet dancer **Deborah Wingert**. Guest artists have included the Broadway director **Jerry Zaks** and choreographer **Chet Walker** (who spends summers in the Berkshires as the jazz director at Jacob's Pillow).

"The kids from New York are in wonderful private schools and take wonderful classes during the year. They have high goals for themselves. What we teach is it's okay if you're not the best," the director of Belvoir Terrace, **Diane Marcus**, said.

Belvoir Terrace and Camp Greylock are very different camps, but their directors are married to each other and share their expertise. Camp Greylock is helping Belvoir Terrace introduce archery this season, while Belvoir Terrace helped hire the theater instructor at Camp Greylock.

Campers will not often spot their directors together, however, not even at the socials organized for the girls and boys. Mr. Marcus lives at Camp Greylock during the summer, and Mrs. Marcus lives at Belvoir Terrace. When they catch up, it's by phone at around 2 in the morning — a land line, naturally, because cell phones (and hand-held video games) are prohibited at the camps.

"The boys kind of like it. These are active kids," Mr. Marcus said.

Miss Eley is looking forward to horseback riding lessons, while her sister **Lauren** plans to focus on modern dance. In addition to making lifelong friends — who may well end up in the same trading firm or law office years later — honing skills is a large part of the camp experience.

Mrs. Green's older son, **Zachary**, who graduated from Hunter College High School this year, holds the highest batting average in the city's high school league, she says, which

active kids," Mr. Marcus said.

"There is no time for any of that," a mother of three girls attending Belvoir Terrace, **Susan Eley**, who runs an art gallery on the Upper West Side, said. "It's seven weeks of heaven away from the technology they're obsessed with."

For Mrs. Eley, seven weeks away from her three children will be "like a honeymoon," she said.

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