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Deerkill Summer Camp in Suffern opens for season

Children get 25 summer activities to choose from

Jackie Saunders
The Journal News

SUFFERN — Seated on a high bench in front of the pottery wheel, 12-year-old Veronica Murphy molds clay to create a vase on the circular, rotating platform.

"I find myself in the middle of the school year dreaming about camp," said Murphy, a West Nyack resident.

The dream became a reality yesterday when Deerkill Summer Camp held its opening day of the season.

Comprising 15 acres on Wilder Road in Suffern, the day camp has been operating since 1958, and is currently run by Robert and Karen Rhodes of Suffern.

No transition period into camp life is necessary at Deerkill; on the first day campers are already swimming, making crafts and playing dodgeball.

"The buses arrived in the morning and the children greeted each other and their counselors on the hockey field," said camp director Karen Rhodes, who has worked at Deerkill for 29 years.

On the edge of the wooden stage in the drama cabin a group of campers eagerly flipped through musical song books distributed by a counselor.

"What I like best about camp is my friends," said 12-year-old Amanda Girvan of Highland Mills as she looked through the "Les Miserables" song book. "Theater Arts is my favorite activity."

A variety show will be held at the end of July.

The camp holds club hour for 40 minutes Monday through Thursday, a time when campers choose from 25 activities.

Breathless from playing a tennis game in the sun, 12-year-old Eric Shine of Norwood, N.J., recalled a fun memory when he and his friends jumped into the pool, which was "really cold."

"It is a fun place to hang out," Shine said. "This is the only camp I have gone to for a second year in a row."

Deerkill has campers from Rockland, Bergen and Orange counties as well as Manhattan.

Ten-year-old Jaymie Truhling of Monsey is looking forward to this year's page-

About the camp

- www.deerkilldaycamp.com
- 845-354-1466
- 54 Wilder Road, Suffern

Camp life

A weekly visit to the camps kids call home in summer

eant.

"It isn't a pageant for girls," Truhling said, correcting the common notion of what a pageant is. "The boy counselors dress up as girls. Last year my counselor dressed up as Madonna because it was the only dress that fit him."

In the arts and crafts pavilion, a group of campers made model dinosaurs, and in the wood shop a group of girls sanded small pieces of wood for jewelry boxes.

For the camper who loves nature and animals, Deerkill provides a small garden as well as a miniature donkey, Little Chief, and a miniature horse, Stretch.

A new activity this summer is racing remote control boats.

A mini-golf course, small lake for boating, zip line and ropes course are a few of the unique facilities Deerkill offers.

One of the most popular features is an old red fire engine next to the playground.

"Kids swarm all over it," said Rhodes. "They talk in to the loud speakers and pretend they are driving."

A large green slide in the corner of the property is a habitual stop for the thrill-seeking camper.

"Even the counselors go down that slide," Rhodes said with a laugh.

If a Deerkill camper is asked what his or her favorite activity is, the answer is likely to be dodgeball.

The dodgeball games are safe because of good supervision and adherence to rules, Rhodes said.

"We are very lucky we started with a beautiful day," Rhodes said. "Starting camp on a rainy day is tough."

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Kathy Gardner/The Journal News

Aarin Sauberman gets into the pool on opening day yesterday at Deerkill Summer Camp in Suffern. The camp on Wilder Road has been operating since 1958.