

Beyond campfires

Nontraditional camps teach children everything from ecology to cooking to creative writing

By Lockie Hunter
WNC Parent contributor

Looking for a special experience for your child this summer? Are you raising a budding environmentalist? Does your child have a gift for telling stories? Perhaps your child loves to cook or enjoys growing vegetables and herbs.

Nontraditional camps can nurture many aspects of your child's soul and may fill him or her with lasting impressions of the bounty of our beautiful mountains and the creative people who inhabit them.

Here's a sampling of what's available in Western North Carolina, beyond the traditional camp.

RiverLink RiverCamps

RiverCamps offer your child an opportunity to get up-close and personal with our very own French Broad River.

"RiverLink is excited to work through our education and volunteer programs with the next generation of river stewards," said Karen Cragolin, RiverLink executive director.

Typical camp activities include (but are not limited to) environmental education, river recreation, service learning, poetry and art lessons, rafting trips, river games, river animals puppet shows, river cleanup community service projects and interpretive nature walks (plant and animal identification).

"The summer camp experience creates lasting childhood memories, as



SPECIAL TO WNC PARENT

Teach your camper to cook the Italian way at Carolina Day's Summer Quest Italian cooking camp.

Freedom to Soar!
educating mind, body, and spirit

**Rainbow Mountain
Children's School**

**Open House
March 30**

**Preschool - 8th Grade
4:30 to 6:00pm**



www.rmcs.org
828-258-9264





SPECIAL TO WNC PARENT

RiverLink's RiverCamps teach children about the French Broad River in both fun and serious ways.

well as what we hope will become a lifelong relationship with our French Broad River," Cragnolin said.

Hickory Nut Gap Farm Camp

A day camp for 6- to 13-year-olds, Hickory Nut Gap Farm Camp tries to give children the kind of time they might have had on their grandfather's farm years ago.

"We spend time collecting eggs, leading the ponies, learning to ride the horses, swimming, making pots, playing with the chicks and at the end of the week giving a play for all friends and relatives," says Annie Ager, an owner of the farm.

And don't forget the horses.

"You learn to ride in the ring and on the trail, and there are popsicles to cool you off on hot days," adds Ager. "Sometimes we visit the pigs or take creek walks and pick berries. Some days we go to Crawdad Falls and have s'mores."

Appalachia School of Holistic Herbalism Earth Sprouts Herbal Day Camp

At Earth Sprouts, campers take plant walks and explore the organic gardens at Soulflower Botanical Sanctuary, the school's 30-acre facility near Leicester.

"Through exploration of the plant and animal kingdoms, children gain a deeper

respect and understanding for the natural world and reconnect with the inherent wisdom that all living beings are interdependent," said Ceara Foley, ASHH director and instructor.

Earth Sprouts learn to recognize safe, common, medicinal plants.

"They love to pet the Nigerian Dwarf goats, make fresh herbed butter, and debate which came first; the chicken or the egg," Foley said. "Basic gardening skills are taught and children bring home calendula seedlings to add to their gardens. Children make sun teas, herbal root beers, wild salads, salves, flower essences, spritzers, compresses, styptics

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Camps with unique experiences

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and wound washes. They bring home a versatile and highly effective first-aid kit that they have created and know how to use.

“Earth Sprouts will bestow your child with empowerment, fond memories, new friends and the knowledge that all life is sacred and deeply entwined,” Foley added.

Carolina Day School Summer Quest cooking camps

Mangia mangia! Take Play-doh to the next level at Carolina Day’s Italian Cooking Camp and make homemade pasta. Campers will make pizza, pasta, pastries and breads. Campers don’t need to bring lunch — they’ll eat everything they make.

Do you have a sweet tooth? Learn to make your own candy at Candy Cooking Camp. Children will make chocolates, hard candy and lollipops.

Both camps are open to rising third- to sixth-graders.

Terra Summer

Terra Summer, whose motto is “Thinking through Food,” is an experiential, interdisciplinary, out-of-the-box day camp that uses the magical world of food and the story behind what we eat to get children to think about their place in the world and the impact that they as individuals can have on the world.

Everything at Terra is anchored to food, from learning to grow vegetables, to cooking, to group discussion about the history of food.

“The daily group cooking time teaches children cooking skills, empowers them and helps them develop a healthy, mindful relationship to food,” said Sybil Fix, the founder and director



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Terra Summer's four-week camp deals with everything about food, from growing it to cooking and enjoying it.

of Terra Summer.

Fix added that campers also discuss many of the environmental, social and economic issues that relate to food and food production.

“We eat together, make food art, work on a food-related portfolio project, and take many fun food-related field trips.”

The camp is for children ages 11-14.

Writing Camp at Thomas Wolfe Memorial

The Thomas Wolfe Memorial provides the home base for the summer writing camp program facilitated by local writer and freelance creative writing teacher Janet Hurley. She helps children discover their creativity through experiential exercises, fun writing prompts, group discussions and individual attention.

A favorite activity has been the writing safaris when participants “hunt inspiration” in downtown Asheville. Each participant has the opportunity to read for friends and family in the Visitor Cen-

CAMP INFORMATION

RiverLink RiverCamps

Camp dates: June 14-18 and 21-25 (rising 3rd-5th grade); July 5-9 and 12-16 (rising 6th-8th grade)

Cost: \$200 per week, \$25 registration fee (fee waived for parents/guardians who are RiverLink members)

Call Rebecca Childress at 252-8474, ext. 111, or education@riverlink.org

Hickory Nut Gap Farm Camp

Dates: June 21-July 23

Cost: \$350 per week

Call Susie at 628-3546 or Annie at 273-6236 or visit hickorynutgapfarmcamp.com

Appalachia School of Holistic Herbalism

Earth Sprouts Herbal Day Camp

Dates: July 26-30

Cost: \$175

Call 350-1221 or visit HerbsHeal.com

Cooking camps at Carolina Day School's Summer Quest

Camp dates: Candy Making, June 14-18; Italian Cooking July 19-23

Cost: \$165 per session

Call Libby Roland at 274-0757 or lroland@cdschool.org

Terra Summer

Camp dates: June 14-July 9 and July 19-Aug. 13

Cost: \$880 per four week session

Call Sybil Fix at 782-7842 or visit terrasummer.org.

True Ink writing camp

Dates: Starts June 14

Cost: fees vary

Call Janet Hurley at 215-9002 or visit trueink.com

ter auditorium.

This summer, in addition to the basic writing-sampler program for younger writers who want to dabble in poetry, fiction or creative nonfiction, two new collaborations are in the works for older students. The first, with Black Mountain College Museum and Art Center, will bring art and writing together, and be co-facilitated by Hurley and local writer Sebastian Matthews. The second is a graphic novel camp, which will incorporate cartooning and drawing lessons from local artist Jeff Kinzel.