

COMMUNITY



Each year, participants make new friends who understand what they are going through during the two-day overnight camp.

Hope and healing

Camp Firefly fills a need for grieving youngsters

By **SALLY FRIEDMAN**
CORRESPONDENT

Camp. For generations of kids, that word has spelled magic. Images of campfires and the accompanying s'mores, swimming, games, trail walks and of course, new best friends.

For the past 12 years, that same word — camp — has meant comfort, understanding, emotional relief and, a feeling of belonging.

Camp Firefly, founded by the Moorestown Visiting Nurse Association, has filled a deep need for area children ages 7 to 14 who have lost a parent or other close loved one, and have found solace and insight through a carefully planned combination of usual camp experience, and equally carefully conceived grief support.

"The first year, members of our hospice team saw the need and rallied," said Kim Plasket, director of public communications for MVNA. "That first year the camp was almost entirely funded by out-of-pocket donations from our staff and a few friends of the agency."

Fifty children came to camp for a weekend that year with all kinds of expectations and emotions, she said. Predictably, some were excited; some were scared and shy. Just as with many kids' first camp experience, for some of the children, there was that pit of the



Campers prepare to place flowers in honor of their lost loved ones.

stomach fear of being away from home.

"But our counselors literally took them by the hand and let them know that they'll be right by their side," Plasket said.

That first camp weekend has morphed into an annual tradition,

this year Aug. 26 and 27 at Camp Ockanickon in Medford, that has served more than 500 children.

Activities, which are folded into one weekend, include the usual swimming and canoeing and T-shirt making, but also blend in activities like memorial services, a

candlelight memorial boat launch and "similar loss" (father, mother, sibling, grandparent) support groups.

Psychologist Andra Vasko, MVNA bereavement coordinator and Camp Firefly leader, has seen it all, and has a very personal

perspective on young grieving.

"My father died when I was young, and it was, of course, a devastating time for me," she said. "The worst thing has happened, but some of these youngsters don't know anyone in their immediate world who is going through the same struggle. This weekend at camp is a reminder that yes, it does happen to other kids." Vasko said.

Referrals to Camp Firefly come from school teachers and school counselors.

Vasko also said counselors who deal with these youngsters for the weekend are carefully screened and trained, and that youngsters who clearly need more help and support can attend ongoing bereavement groups through the year at the MVNA offices on Harper Drive.

Activities like art therapy, memorial events and pre-camp meet the counselor nights all help to make the weekend both comforting and effective.

"One of our important messages to the youngsters is that grief, painful as it is, can make you stronger, and that if you can get through this, you can get through anything."

Taylor Kane, now a rising sophomore at George Washington University, learned that lesson through her own experience with loss.

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A PIECE OF HISTORY

On this date in 2004, Ken Jennings began his 74-game winning streak on the syndicated game show "Jeopardy!"

Avoiding dangerous summer stroller mistakes

By **RACHEL SIMPSON**
CORRESPONDENT

We all know that leaving children in hot cars, even for a minute, is a huge no-no, but did you know that many parents make dangerous summer stroller mistakes?

As temperatures begin to soar, parents want to shield their babies from the heat and other negative effects from the sun, including sunburns, often by covering their strollers with a blanket, but this common stroller slip-up could be putting your child at risk. While my kids are too big for strollers now, I admit covering the stroller from the hood

down with a lightweight blanket to protect their little arms and legs from the sun as they slept. I always left a peephole on the side for air, but never realized I was actually putting them in danger of overheating.

According to research, covering your stroller with a blanket — even if it's a very thin cloth — can actually have a furnacelike effect. In fact, doing so can cause the temperature inside the stroller to skyrocket to dangerous levels. Researchers conducted an experiment to see what



would happen and found that without a cover, the temperature inside a stroller left in the heat was 71.6 degrees. After covering it with a thin cover for only 30 minutes, the temperature inside rose to 93.2 degrees (a difference of 21.6 degrees).

Who would have thought something as innocent as covering your baby's stroller with a blanket on a hot day could be so dangerous? But young children are particularly at risk for overheating and even heatstroke. When covered with a

blanket, it is also that much harder to detect the signs of heatstroke, which include hot, red, dry skin; rapid pulse; restlessness; lethargy; rapid, shallow breathing; vomiting and unconsciousness. When it's hot, it is best to dress your baby in lightweight, loose-fitting clothing; keep him in the shade; provide additional fluids, or keep him inside all together. If your home is very hot and you don't have air-conditioning, visit a public library, the mall or a community shelter provided especially for beating the heat.

Rachel Simpson is a freelance writer and mother of two young children. Contact her at momtomomrachel@yahoo.com.

Civil War history comes to life in Eastampton program

By MELISSA HANEJKO
CORRESPONDENT

“All warfare is based on deception.” Those famous words were written by a Chinese military strategist back in the sixth century, but they still resonate in modern times.

During the American Civil War, similar phrases were likely uttered during and after battle. In 1863, Confederate and Union troops engaged in the Battle of Chancellorsville in Virginia. Led by Robert E. Lee, the Confederate Army was outnumbered almost two-to-one by Union troops. In an outcome that shocked the nation, including President Lincoln, Lee and his troops emerged victorious.

But, as another famous saying goes, Lee may have won the battle, but he lost the war. The skirmish cost the Confederacy almost 25 percent of its troops, as well as Lee’s right-hand man, Lt. Gen. Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson.

The war’s next major battle, which would also be the tipping point for the Union, was the Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania. The famous battle was the war’s deadliest, but the Union defeated

Confederate forces. The win spurred the Union toward its eventual victory.

Though neither battle occurred in New Jersey, a group of men from the state played an important role in both. The 5th New Jersey Volunteer Infantry was formed in 1861 and immediately deployed to Washington, D.C.

Hear about the 5th New Jersey Infantry’s place in history with a presentation at the Smithville Mansion on Wednesday afternoon.

Eric Orange, a museum attendant for the Burlington County Division of Parks, will discuss the regiment’s role in the Battle of Chancellorsville, and the effect on the Battle of Gettysburg. Learn about the Infantry’s commander, Colonel William J. Sewell, who earned a Medal of Honor for his actions in Chancellorsville, and his predecessor Capt. Henry H. Woolsey, who took over due to injury.

The presentation will take place from 3 to 4 p.m. Wednesday in the Billiard Room of the Smithville Mansion, 803 Smithville Road. For more information, visit co.burlington.nj.us.

The early hiker catches some exercise at Moorestown park

By MELISSA HANEJKO
CORRESPONDENT

Avoid a mid-week slump with an early wake-up call on Wednesday morning. Getting up early to avoid feeling sleepy? Sounds counterproductive, but it seems to work for the birds, who rise early to snag the juiciest worms.

Next week, you may be able to catch the early birds in action, at Boundary Creek Natural Resource Area’s early morning guided hike.

When you’re looking to be energized and invigorated, nothing beats a walk through the park with nature awakening around you. In fact, this hike promises to be “Better than Coffee.” Those are strong words from the Burlington

County Division of Parks, which is organizing the event. Almost as strong as a freshly brewed pot of espresso...

But there’s nothing sweeter than a late spring morning, dewy and golden. Not even your favorite extra-large iced caramel latte can compete. While the sights and sounds of the 34-acre Moorestown park are sure to awaken the senses, participants are welcome to bring their favorite caffeinated beverage to wake up their central nervous system.

The adventure begins at 7 a.m., as participants embark on a 60-minute trek through the scenic park. Journey through upland and lowland forests and fields, and alongside

wetlands, in the picturesque park nestled on the banks of the Rancocas Creek. A county park naturalist will lead hikers on an exhilarating adventure that will get your day started on the right foot.

After the walk, take a few minutes to watch the birds and wildlife conduct their morning routines on the park’s observation decks. Spend a quiet moment or two at the butterfly garden before heading out to start the rest of your day.

Participants should meet at the Boundary Creek Natural Resource Area, at 518 Creek Road. Additional walks will take place on July 25 and August 15. For more details, visit co.burlington.nj.us.



CONTRIBUTED

A STEM summer program at RCBC will explore a variety of health care and science and technology fields for high school students

RCBC offers summer programs

By BCT STAFF

Rowan College at Burlington County offers a summer program for high school students interested in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and health sciences

The Health Sciences, STEM Career Exploration and College Exposure program, created by RCBC’s Workforce Development Institute, will meet for 11 sessions to introduce students to several health care and STEM fields as well as give high school students practical skills required in the industry.

The program will explore a variety of health care and STEM fields, including:

- mechanical, electrical and biomedical engineering;
- biology;
- chemistry;
- forensics;
- clinical trials;
- astronomy;
- pharmacology;
- veterinary science;
- physics;
- aquaculture.

In addition to exposure to these fields, high school students will develop skills required to be successful, including math tips and

techniques, communication skills and technical writing.

Students also will participate in field trips to the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, the College of Physicians Museum of Philadelphia, including the Mutter Museum, and the Historical Medical Library, Adventure Aquarium, Hill-Rom/Mediq, Cheyney University’s Aquaculture Farm, and Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceutical.

The program will run

Monday through Thursday, from June 26 to July 13. There will be no class on July 4.

Students can register through WebAdvisor’s noncredit section at rcbc.edu/WebAdvisor or by mail or in person until June 19. For more information, call 856-242-5259. For more program information, email info@healthlinkinternational.org

Class of 2017

Life Center Academy

Graduation Date: June 2, 2017, 7 p.m.
Class Size: 26
Valedictorian: Antonia M. Giles
Salutatorian: Charles Alvin Curtis-Thomas Jr.
Percentage of graduates going on to post-secondary education: 90%
Percentage of graduates going into the military: 5%



PHOTOS / MOORESTOWN VISITING NURSES ASSOCIATION
Among the activities available at Camp Firefly is paddling around the lake.

Camp

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She was only 5 when her father, Jack Kane, an attorney, died after a battling a genetic disease.

“It was a really tough time. I was in kindergarten and I was trying to understand that he was never coming back, that he had gone to heaven. But it turned out that Miss Gibson, my kindergarten teacher, had just lost her husband, so she was able to help me,” she said.

Still, she remembers always being the girl who lost her father through those early elementary school years.

Her mother remarried several years after her father’s death, and she easily adjusted to having her stepfather in her life.

In fifth grade, she had her weekend at Camp Firefly, and it helped. Everyone there had had a loss, and the realization came that she was not as alone as she had felt before.

And by the time she was 16, Kane became a junior counselor at Camp Firefly. “I had gotten training, but I was still a little nervous. Still, it felt really good to kind of give back, and I hope to do it again if my college schedule allows for it.”

Today, she realizes that loss is part of life.

“And yes, I still think of my father every day. And that’s fine. And I think he’d be proud that I’m trying to help other kids know that you can stop hurting, but keep on loving,” she said.

Registration for Camp



The weekend camp offers youngsters traditional activities, as well as memorial services, a candlelight memorial boat launch and support groups.

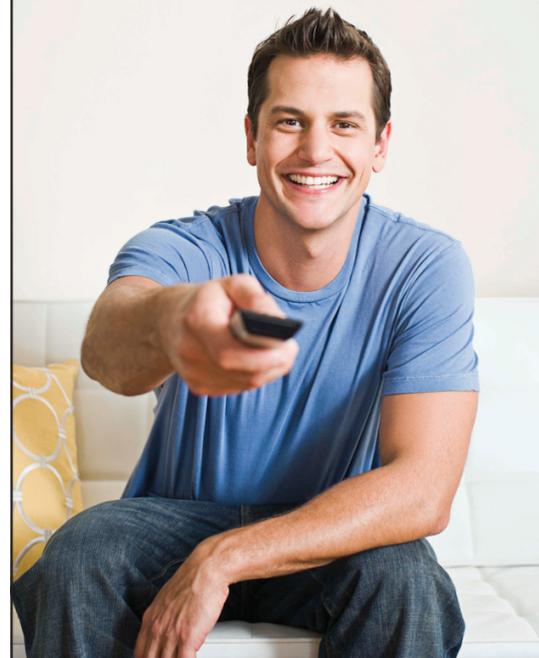
Firefly is now open. Campers must reside in Burlington, Camden or Gloucester counties. For information, call 856-552-1300 or visit moorestownvna.org.

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