

Welcome to summer at the Musconetcong Valley Community Association. At the MVCA, we look at summer as a special time when we can offer and enjoy a variety of activities as part of our camp programs. This information booklet is designed for parents to understand the philosophy and policies of the MVCA so we may work together to provide a rewarding and enriching summer experience for your child, and a stress-free experience for you!

**MVCA HISTORY:** The MVCA was incorporated in 1995 as a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) community organization headquartered in Washington Township, Morris County, New Jersey. Since its inception, the MVCA has provided school-age child care, camp, and a host of other recreational, educational, and cultural programs in Morris and Warren Counties. We have reached out to hundreds of families through our programs and dedicated community involvement.

Overseen by a Board of Trustees, the MVCA operating staff includes a full-time director, a bookkeeper, administrative/program associates and staff specific to our programs (*see Camp Staff*).

**MVCA CAMP HISTORY:** In 1996 the MVCA introduced Camp Musconetcong and Explorers Camp at Rock Spring Park in Long Valley. These programs have continued to the present. Liberty Meadows Camp in Independence Township ran from 1999-2004. The MVCA maintains a bus stop in Independence to transport campers from that area to our camps in Long Valley. 2003 saw the beginning of Clover View Camp in Mount Olive, and an additional pick-up site for Explorers Camp. We have maintained a before/after camp program in Mount Olive with an additional bus pick-up/drop off.

Our camps are licensed by the State of New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, and receive annual inspections by the State and/or local municipality.

**CAMP PHILOSOPHY:** The MVCA believes that summer camp provides the ideal venue in which children can grow - individually, and socially as part of a team. We strive to accomplish this in a safe environment through a fun and affordable camp program. Campers are encouraged to participate with an open mind in all of the activities during the camp day. In 1998, a camp counselor coined the phrase "an I-can-do attitude" when describing his second graders. Sometimes this concept means just trying every activity. Reinforcing this concept at home goes a long way in preparing a child for the camp season.

**PHYSICAL SETTINGS:** Camp Musconetcong is held at Rock Spring Park in Long Valley. The outdoor setting provides space to play games and sports as

well as shade under trees and the open-air pavilions which the MVCA donated to Washington Township in 1998.

In case of severe rain, camp will either start out or move to an indoor location. Activities will be adjusted to fit the facility. If the weather clears during the day, camp may move back to its regular site. A call to the camp site phone will confirm location at all times. Group text messages will also be sent whenever possible.

Campers must treat all facilities, buses, equipment and nature with respect. This includes cleaning up after themselves after lunch, snacks, and activities, and pitching in to ensure our camp site remains clean and inviting.

**CAMP STAFF:** At the MVCA, we believe that our staff is our most valuable resource. Well-trained counselors will be responsible for making our campers' summers the most fun and enriching possible. Many of our camp staff have participated in the MVCA Counselor-in-Training program and have volunteered for a summer prior to being employed.

All staff is required to attend pre-camp training sessions where we discuss such topics as safety, positive discipline, communicating with children, and confidentiality. We also review camp rules and policies, schedules, and curriculum. Separate Pediatric CPR and First Aid training is offered. An experienced camp director, with help from the MVCA director and support staff, oversees staff and activities on a daily basis. Group counselors are high school graduates, and assistant counselors are at least 16 years old. Volunteers, though not solely responsible for a group of campers, round out the staff with special interests and insight.

Background checks are done on all camp staff, and fingerprint checks are required for staff 18 and older.

The average staff:camper ratio is 1:6, with 1:4 for younger children. This is lower than the State mandate of 2:24. A lower ratio assures that each camper receives individual attention. On some trips the ratios are narrowed even further for safety reasons – subs and support staff are brought in to help.

**REGISTRATION:** A camper is considered registered when the MVCA receives:

- Completed registration form accompanied by a \$25 registration fee
- Completed medical form, including immunization dates (required by NJ for first-time campers)
- At minimum, a \$50 deposit for each week or session noted

The MVCA archives immunization information from past years; please include any updates with your child's registration application.

**TUITION:** Upon receipt of a camper's registration, the MVCA office generates invoices for any outstanding tuition. Full tuition payments must be made before a camper can begin the summer program. The payment schedule is as follows:

- June 1 for June and July weeks
- July 1 for August weeks

**Schedule:** The MVCA offers the flexibility of a weekly program, so families can sign up for exactly the weeks they need and want. Partial week schedules are not recommended, as missing days during the week often prevents campers from completing projects, etc. However, we do accommodate most requests.

**Schedule changes:** With adequate notice you may change or add weeks, but changes may not be done retroactively.

**Discounts:** The MVCA offers:

5% discounts on total camp tuition (excluding before and after camp care):

- Entire tuition paid on or before April 15
- For each sibling in a family, regardless of camp program

10% discount on total camp tuition (excluding before and after camp care):

- Entire tuition paid on or before March 15

A discount is also offered to families who recruit first-time campers. Early payment, recruiter and sibling discounts may be combined.

**Outstanding balances:** Balances not paid within 30 days of time of service are subject to a) a late charge of \$20 or 5% of the unpaid amount, whichever is greater, and b) 1.5% interest per month calculated from the initial due date, plus c) any costs associated with collection of the debt.

**Refunds:** Any request for a tuition refund must be in writing according to the payment schedule, i.e. by June 1 for June and July sessions, and by July 1 for August sessions. The \$25 registration fee and \$50 per session tuition deposits are non-refundable.

**Scholarships:** Partial scholarships are available to qualifying families. Eligibility is determined by a sliding scale based on need. A scholarship application can be obtained through the MVCA office. The completed form accompanied by the required documentation plus the camp application must be returned to the MVCA prior to May 1 for consideration. Applicants are notified in writing on or about May 10 whether or not their request has been approved. Partial scholarship recipients are expected to pay the remaining tuition according to the payment schedule included in the MVCA Summer Camp Guide unless other arrangements are made with the MVCA accounting department.

**TUITION SUBSIDY PROGRAMS:** The MVCA is pleased to cooperate with regional child care agencies and the families who receive tuition subsidy for

MVCA programs. In order to make the arrangement work, the MVCA and the parents of those children in the program must take responsibility for and follow-through on certain procedures. To that end, the MVCA will:

- Make available a working attendance “swiper” at drop-off and dismissal times.
- Upload the “swiper” at least once, usually twice, weekly.
- Refer to the attendance log information found in the **echildcarenj** provider’s online portal
- Notify parents in a timely manner if there are issues.

Parents will:

- “Swipe” their child(ren) in and out each day unless an alternate arrangement is approved by the MVCA Director prior to their child(ren) beginning the program, and look at the generated receipt to make sure each transaction is “accepted.”
- Arrange for an additional “swipe” card for a family member who will regularly drop off/pick up, and train him/her how to use it.
- Notify the MVCA reasonably in advance of any expected absences or schedule changes.
- Notify the MVCA of any unplanned absences prior to the start of the program day.
- Immediately correct incomplete “swipes” once brought to their attention.

In the case of parents not complying with these procedures, the MVCA will contact the family’s referral agency. Continued non-compliance may result in the child(ren) being removed from the program.

Undocumented absences may result in parents being assessed financially for the affected days.

Each family is responsible for their tuition copayment as indicated on the CCRS contract, and will receive an invoice for same, unless the MVCA chooses to waive the copay.

### **PROGRAM CURRICULUM:**

**Youth Camp:** The MVCA presents a weekly theme-based Youth Camp (grades K-5) program. The activities in a given week are designed to complement the theme. In the course of a week, campers may participate in sports, games, arts and crafts, science, fitness, music, dance, drama, and cooking. Time is set aside for group projects. Additional time is allotted for quiet activities, water and lunch breaks, etc.

Swimming is scheduled for twice each week. One day per week is designated for a full-day off-site trip. Parents are invited to accompany the camp on trips if they wish, at their own expense. The camps may also plan theme days and special

treats. Please refer to your child's camp's calendar for trip days, extended days, and other special events.

**Explorers Camp:** Explorers Camp is open to students entering 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grades. Each day, campers leave their base camp to travel to one or more places in New Jersey, New York, or Pennsylvania. The variety of destinations includes amusement parks, swimming, museums, historic sites, sporting events, movies and more. Enrollment in the Explorers program is limited to 48, as one school bus is used. The Explorers staff emphasizes safety, mature behavior, personal responsibility and harmony among the teen campers. A calendar is provided; changes may need to be made during the season due to weather conditions.

**Counselor-in-Training Program:** Teens who have graduated from 8<sup>th</sup> grade are eligible for the MVCA Counselor-in-Training program. It is a four-week course designed for the student who wants to learn what it is really like to be a camp counselor. Through group sessions with the camp director and other staff, they learn how a group of children interact, and how child development determines the success of many activities. They learn how to effectively communicate with children, administer positive discipline, work as a team, and handle emergencies. They also work daily with each age group, participating with the groups in their activities and putting their practical knowledge to work.

In order to succeed in the C.I.T. program, teens must have a strong desire to participate, be motivated, and be willing to try new things. Many then choose to use their acquired knowledge by volunteering. Finishing the program does not guarantee a paid camp position when the student becomes 16, but consideration is given to participants who have shown maturity and initiative during the program. All who successfully finish the program receive a certificate.

**Swimming:** The youth camps swim twice per week, weather permitting, at Hackettstown Community Pool. A camper will take a swim test on his/her first swim day of the season. Per criteria outlined by the State of NJ, each camper receives a designation of non-swimmer, beginner, or swimmer. A colored wristband lets the MVCA and pool staff know where each child is allowed to swim.

A buddy system is used for swimming. Also, each camper is given an item, e.g. clothespin, bearing his/her name, that he/she carries at all times at the pool. When he/she goes into a certain pool or section, he/she gives the clothespin to the staff member assigned to that area. That way, the counselors know exactly who is in their care when they do routine buddy checks. The MVCA is proud that this system of swimmer accountability has been recommended to other camps by the management of the Hackettstown Pool.

Safety is the #1 rule for swimming. Consequently, strict rules are in place at the pool. The camps review these rules every swim day.

It is up to you and your child whether he/she prefers to wear his/her swimsuit to camp, or change there or at the pool. We have found that keeping an extra dry swimsuit and towel in his/her backpack is a great idea in case of an unscheduled pool trip or water fun at camp.

**Trips:** Youth campers look forward to their weekly field trip. The trips are generally full-day; sometimes the camp day must be extended to allow for ample time – this information is available in advance. Parents are welcome to attend the trips! If there is room, they may also ride on the camp bus. As the weekly trips are part of the camp curriculum, there are no immediate accommodations for students who do not wish to go, and refunds for those days cannot be given.

**CAMP CALENDARS:** Part of the fun of camp is celebrating special days and events. A calendar is available for each camp. Please keep this information handy so your child can come to camp prepared for the day. We will also post the calendars on our website [www.mvca.org](http://www.mvca.org). You will receive more detailed information from your camp director. All calendars must be flexible due to weather conditions or other situations beyond the MVCA's control.

**PREPARING FOR CAMP:** A child who knows what to expect at camp tends to be more confident and eager to participate in all of the day's activities. It is a great idea for parents to talk to their children prior to the beginning of the season, and on the way to camp every day. We suggest reinforcing these concepts with your child:

- Participating in all activities, including clean-up
- Abiding by camp rules
- Respecting staff and other campers, including their possessions
- Staying healthy – food, water, sunscreen, etc.

A camper should have these things with him/her every day:

- **Sneakers – the only acceptable footwear at camp**
- A good lunch in an insulated bag with an ice pack
- Snacks – time given in morning and again in afternoon
- Water bottle - labeled
- Clothing suitable for all activities
- Swimsuit and towel – in case of schedule change or water fun at camp
- Sunscreen – please apply at home before camp, and we will reapply
- Change of clothes for younger children

Most campers bring a backpack containing everything they will need. Please label **everything** with first and last name. We keep a lost and found at camp, and will make every attempt to return things that are labeled. Parents are asked to check the L&F periodically. At the end of the camp season, many unclaimed items are given to charity.

We recommend that campers do not bring:

- Electronic games
- Cell phones – if a camper needs to call a parent for some reason, he/she may use the camp phone, and receive a call in an emergency
- Toys from home
- Medicine that is not accounted for by the Health Director
- Money, except on pool or trip days. Then, it should be placed in a labeled ziplock bag and handed to your child's counselor.
- Makeup, nail polish, etc.
- Gum/lollipops

**HEALTH:** A healthy camper is a happy camper. Please keep your child home if he/she exhibits signs of a communicable illness, or is complaining of a sore throat or stomach problems. In order for a child to participate fully in all camp activities, he/she must have energy, so a good night sleep is important.

If a child gets sick at camp, we will attempt to get in touch with a parent by phone. If a parent is not available, we will call someone on the camper's emergency list.

During the camp day, there are many opportunities for a camper to get out of the sun and go under a pavilion or shade tree. We encourage them to drink plenty of water throughout the day, and eat a good lunch. Counselors will help campers re-apply sunscreen during the day.

Safety at camp is a major focus, and rules are enforced to insure that campers stay safe:

- Equipment is used only for the purpose it is intended
- Sneakers are worn for all activities
- Campers must ask a counselor before going to the bathroom, etc.
- Seatbelts are worn at all times on the bus, and everyone stays seated while the bus is in motion
- No one leaves the group by him/herself
- Campers keep their hands and feet to themselves
- Things that start on the ground (rocks, sticks, etc.) stay there
- Peanut-free areas are set up for lunch and snack

In the rare case that a child sustains a significant injury at camp, a parent will be called. If the injury requires transport to a hospital, an MVCA staff member will accompany the child to the hospital and stay until a parent or designee arrives.

Hackettstown Medical Center is our primary hospital, but the nature and severity of the injury ultimately determine what hospital is better equipped to care for the patient.

**Medication:** If a camper needs, or may need, to have medicine at camp, a parent must complete and return a *Permission to Administer Medicine* form. All meds must be in the original packaging with the dispensing directions clearly visible. Please be cautious about expiration dates. Meds are kept in the camp first aid bag, and administered to the camper by a staff member.

**COMMUNICATION:** The more the camper, parents, and MVCA communicate, the more likely it is that everyone's needs and expectations will be met.

- Pre-camp: Please make the MVCA aware of any special needs or interests your child may have. Feel free to call the MVCA office at 908-876-3141 or email [director@mvca.org](mailto:director@mvca.org) with questions about activities, procedures, tuition or schedules. The goal of the MVCA is to make and keep each camper and family confident from the first day at camp to the last.
- During the season: Included with this booklet is a list of the camp cell phone numbers as well as the number for the MVCA office. Please keep a copy of these numbers with you so you can always get in touch with us during the day. Please let us know if someone other than yourself will be picking up your child, or if your child's usual schedule will be altered. Use these numbers for finding out site information in the case of inclement weather.
- We attempt to keep parents updated on weather-related changes, trip return delays, etc. via a GROUP TEXT to each camper's mom. If you would like to include additional people on this group text, please let us know. We try to update the list each Monday for that and subsequent weeks.
- Talk to your child's counselor! Please keep in mind that 9:00 in the morning is a very busy time for him/her, so a different time might be better.
- Post-season: Tell us how your child liked camp, or if you have suggestions about improving the program.
- Information is posted on the MVCA website [www.mvca.org](http://www.mvca.org).

**MVCA SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY:** In order to protect the children enrolled in MVCA programs, staff, parents or other adults are prohibited from taking photos of minors, except under the specific direction of the MVCA Director. Any direct verbal, written or visual reference to a minor in a public forum, including, but not limited to, social media is prohibited.

\*The MVCA Director may post photos taken at an MVCA program from time to time on social media. These may include photos of children engaged in program



activities endorsed by the Director. Minors will not be identified by name in such posts, and the MVCA will be clearly identified as the posting entity, e.g. MVCA Facebook page.

The MVCA Summer Camp Program application form contains the statement “My above named child has permission to participate in all activities that are part of this program. I also give my permission to use any photos taken during this program for use in program literature and publicity.” By signing (and dating) this statement, the parent or legal guardian attests that he/she understands the \* policy. The parent/guardian can choose not to sign the statement, in which case the MVCA will comply with his/her wishes.

***Thank you for choosing the MVCA for summer camp fun. We appreciate your trusting your very important camper to us!***

**MVCA – where the best summers ever just keep getting better!**

Revised January, 2019