



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# YMCA/APYC CAMP KEKOKA

## OVERNIGHT CAMP

### 2023 Parent Guide

Thank you for choosing YMCA/APYC Camp Kekoka for your summer fun. Every child deserves a moment in the sun, a chance to learn, a special time to grow, and a special time to make friends and become a better person. At Camp Kekoka, the core values of YMCA living- caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility, shape the best moments of childhood into unforgettable memories. Campers come to camp to have fun. Having fun means making friends, being part of a group, and feeling liked, respected, and appreciated.

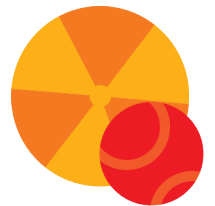
At Camp Kekoka, they have opportunities to gain a sense of self-worth through their camp participation and can share, assume responsibility, and cooperate effectively with others. This process includes opportunities for children to think critically and make decisions. In this context, participation in camp cannot help but give a child a sense of competence, which is undoubtedly equated with confidence.

The relationship between campers and staff is the most important building block to a successful camp experience. Camp Kekoka counselors are warm, understanding, and friendly. The counselors are fun, loving, mature, and sincere in their desire to provide each child with a safe and enjoyable camp session.

Spirituality is a natural part of each day's camp adventure. At Camp Kekoka, we strive to be inclusive and respectful of each child's beliefs while practicing the principles of Christian living.

At Camp Kekoka, we are extremely excited about your interest in us and will do everything possible to provide the finest camp experience for your child.

Stay Awesome,



Ana Mae Morrow, She/Her  
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Leslie Walsh, She/Her  
Resident Camp Coordinator  
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**YMCA MISSION:** To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

# GET OUTSIDE, GROW INSIDE

At Camp Kekoka, we put the fun into play. We focus on preparing our campers and others for their future by engaging them in developing life skills. Through our values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility, our campers learn to become leaders for the causes they believe in, learn to live sustainably and care for our shared environment and live cooperatively in a culturally diverse community.

## A Typical Day at Camp

On the shores of Indian Creek, we serve campers ages 8-16 with supervised activities that teach core values, leadership, and life skills. Every day, campers will participate in various activities, such as group games, arts & crafts, knee boarding, tubing, archery, water skiing, fishing, crabbing, and so much more. Our campers will also have fun growing new friends with our high ropes course, zipline, and rock climbing. Camp has everything; we know our campers will have made a new connection and learn something new each day.

8 a.m.	Rise and Shine
8 a.m.	Breakfast
8 a.m.	Character Value of the Day
9 a.m.-noon	Morning Activity
12:15 p.m.	Lunch
12:45-1:45 p.m.	Rest Period
2-5 p.m.	Track Time Periods 1 and 2
5:30 p.m.	Dinner
6:30-8 p.m.	Evening Activity
8 p.m.	Snack
8:15-9:30 p.m.	Cabin Time/ Shower Rotation/ Family Time
9:30 p.m.	Lights Out



\*Evening program and lights out may be adjusted for youngest or oldest camper groups.

\*Campers have a rotating schedule. The schedules alternated so every child will have the opportunity to be involved in both land and water activities.

## Masks are Optional

Due to the ongoing health pandemic, masks are optional at the discretion of your family and children. **Please note: our health and safety policies are subject to change per direction of the Virginia Department of Health and CDC.**

## Summer Camp Staff

When your child arrives, they will be greeted by many familiar faces, as we have quite a few returning counselors this year. Although returning counselors are great, they cannot do it alone. We have also brought in new staff members who will bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm this summer.

Each counselor is required to participate in over 60 hours of staff training. This includes team-building skills, child abuse prevention, emergency procedures, character development, behavior management, universal precautions, basic First Aid training, CPR, boat safety, and high ropes facilitation certification. We take pride in the high expectations we set for our Camp Counselors,

and we evaluate both our staff and programs regularly throughout the summer.

## Emergency and Medical Information

Your child's safety and well-being while in our care this summer. At registration time, either online or at a local Welcome Center, you will be asked to provide our staff with general information about your child, including allergies, medications, and emergency numbers for camp leadership staff to reach you if necessary.

There is a designated section on our registration forms for you to list who you have authorized to pick up your child from camp. As a safety measure every camper or anyone who picks up a child from camp **MUST** be listed on this form. Photo identification will be required. The camper will not be allowed to leave with the person until they are added to the list by a parent or guardian.

**APYC Parents and Guardians:** Please refer to pick-up and drop-off procedures for more information

## What to Send and How to Dress for Camp

Please send your camper with the items listed below. We suggest you write your camper's first and last name on all their belongings in a permanent marker. Camp Kekoka is not responsible for lost, damaged, or misplaced items.

Where possible, campers use a large duffle bag or Rubbermaid container with a height of 8.5 inches for packing. These items will fit under the camper's bed. Place a list of things inside the duffle to help campers maintain their possessions. If you wish to send items ahead, the shipping address is 1083 Boys Camp Rd., Kilmarnock, VA 22482. When received, items are delivered to the cabin.

### Bedding: Twin Bunk Beds

- Single sheets, with fitted sheet
- 1 blanket or sleeping bag
- 1 pillow and pillowcase
- Towels, at least one for showering, and another for waterfront

### Clothing for 6 Days: (\*) required

- Sweatshirt
- Raincoat
- \*Shirts
- \*Shorts
- \*Underclothing
- \*2-swimsuits
- Long pants
- \*Tennis or closed-toed shoes
- \*Water shoes

### Everyday Items

- Water bottle
- Laundry bag
- Toiletry articles
- Small flashlight
- Sunscreen (SPF 40 or higher)
- Bug repellent
- Small hand sanitizer

### Optional Items

- Face masks/coverings
- Stationary/stamps
- Talent show items
- Jellyfish pants
- Theme week items
- Disposable campers
- Books, comic books, or magazines
- Card games
- Small clip-on fan

### What NOT To Bring

- Any electronics; cell phones, iPods, Gameboys, tablets, computers, internet devices
- Valuables
- Cash
- Tobacco products, alcoholic beverages and illegal substances
- Possession of firearms or weapons



## Sun and Water Safety



Our counselors and camp leadership staff will ensure sunscreen is applied multiple times throughout the day. If your camper tends to get sunburns, please include that on your campers Emergency/Medical form, and be sure to send any special sunscreen your camper may need.

On the first day of each camp session, your camper will take a swim test and the information will be recorded. We encourage all campers to take the swim test multiple times, if they wish, throughout the week. Some activities like Kneeboarding and Water Skiing require campers to pass the swim test.

Our camp partners with the local U.S. Coast Guard to deliver an open water safety briefing on the first morning activity day.

## Behavior Management Policy

The number one goal for Camp Kekoka is that all campers have a safe and rewarding experience. A camper's parent or guardian may be called to pick up their camper if a counselor's redirection techniques are ignored and the camper continues to create an unsafe atmosphere for themselves and their camper group.

Camp Kekoka has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of bullying, including physical harm, racial slurs, or other verbal abuse. Your camper will be sent home immediately without a refund.

## Weather Related Emergency

Camp Kekoka staff will carefully monitor and track all weather systems.



## Refund and Cancellation Policies

If cancellation occurs before May 15, you will receive a full refund, not including the deposit. Any cancellation that takes place after May 15, will result in no refund. There is no penalty for switching weeks for your camper(s). Cancellations must be submitted in writing to camp leadership:

**Leslie Walsh** at [lwalsh@ymcavp.org](mailto:lwalsh@ymcavp.org)

**Eric Schaefer** at [eschaefer@ymcavp.org](mailto:eschaefer@ymcavp.org)

## Opening Day Procedures

Opening Day is an exciting time for everyone. Camper families are a designated spot to park as they arrive. Our check-in processes this year will be entirely outside for the summer of 2023. The entire vehicle will have a health screening upon arriving to camp. Everyone in the vehicle will have their temperature checked and asked questions in regard to COVID-19. If anyone in the vehicle has a temperature at 100.4 or above and/or has any symptoms relating to COVID-19, the entire vehicle will not be permitted to stay. **Please make sure to have any medications (or other pertinent paperwork) easily accessible to hand off to our check-in staff.** You will be given your campers cabin assignment at check-in and camp staff will help your camper find where to go.

Full Week Camp, including CIT- drop-off is Sunday from 3–5 p.m.

Rite of Passage- drop-off is Wednesday from 9-10 a.m.

### Transportation from the Alexandria area

We would always prefer to have you personally drop your child off so that you get the chance to see Camp Kekoka and we can meet you. However, we realize that sometimes this can be difficult given the distance. For a transportation opportunity from Alexandria, please see the below information:

A school bus departs Sunday at 12 p.m. from the Alexandria City Public School's Transportation building at 3540 Wheeler Avenue, next to the city gas pumps and across from the McDonald's.

Parents/guardians will remain in their cars while an officer completes the temperature screening and collects all paperwork. The officer will then help your camper load their belongings onto the bus. Please know that the departure will be on time. If you are late, you will miss the bus. Campers should be picked up at the exact location on the following Friday by 2 p.m.

An Alexandria Police Officer will be riding on the bus with the campers. There is no cost for transportation. A survey is emailed from Leslie Walsh where you can request your camper to ride the bus.

## Closing Day Procedures

### Friday 10–11 a.m.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) should plan to pick up their child by 11 a.m. You are welcome to join us at 10 a.m. for our weekly slideshow and award presentation.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) must provide a photo ID to pick up their camper. This policy is for the protection of all our campers. If someone other than a parent or guardian is picking up your camper, we must have prior written permission and a photo id. Please give written authorization to a Director or Assistant Director upon drop-off, or authorization can be emailed to [lwalsh@ymcavp.org](mailto:lwalsh@ymcavp.org) and [eschaefer@ymcavp.org](mailto:eschaefer@ymcavp.org).

A sign-out sheet is provided at the check-out desk. An authorized adult must sign out each camper before they can leave. This policy is for the protection of all our campers. If your camper has prescription medication, you can collect this at the check-out desk.

# CAMP KEKOKA SUMMER LIFE

## Cabin Assignments

Campers are assigned to cabins by age and grade level. Cabin assignments are given upon check-in. Mutual requests from campers within the same year of age are honored with the approval of the Camp Director (**limited to one friend**). The Camp Director reserves the right to determine the final cabin mate placement.



## Meals

Appealing and nutritious meals are prepared under the careful supervision of our trained dietary staff and satisfy the hearty appetites of campers and staff. Various fresh fruit, cereal, hot breakfasts, and vegetables are offered daily. A main entree, vegetable, salad, bread, and dessert are typical lunch and dinner meals. Lasagna, sausage egg casserole, and cookout nights are the campers' favorites.



**Please Note:** Special dietary needs should be indicated to our Camp Director. The Camp Kekoka Dining Hall is inspected by the Virginia Health Department and maintains a permit to operate a restaurant.

## Lost and Found

Camp Kekoka is not responsible for lost items while your camper is at camp. It is essential that campers clearly label all belongings with their name. We suggest using a permanent marker. Campers will be able to view found items daily. Parents are also encouraged to view these items on closing day. The shipping of found items after the camper's departure may be arranged at the owner's expense.

## Visitation/Phone Calls

Camp Kekoka does not have a visitation day, although letters and emails are welcomed and encouraged. Parents are invited to inspect the facilities and meet the staff on opening and closing days. Due to the volume of campers, Camp Kekoka does not permit campers to make or receive phone calls. (Especially when campers are homesick, we have found that calls from home disrupt the camper's adjustment to camp life.) If an emergency arises at home, we ask that parents contact the Camp at 804-435-3616. Directors will gladly assist you and your camper in every situation.

## Camper Mail and Daily Photo Updates

There is a large volume of mail at Camp Kekoka. We encourage families and friends to write and ask that every mailed item be labeled with the camper's name. Our mailing address is P.O. BOX 580, Kilmarnock, VA 22482. Be aware that because of our rural location, the mail is sometimes not timely. If you wish to send food items, please ensure they are in sealed containers that can be resealed. Campers can receive one-way emails from Bunk1.com.



More information on Bunk1.com will come as we get closer to your campers' week. An email and regular mail are printed and delivered daily at lunchtime. We ask that you put the camper's name in the subject line. Please, no electronic cards or attachments. **Campers will not be able to send emails from camp.**

Photos will also be uploaded to Bunk1.com. Parents and families can view the current photos by clicking the Bunk1 icon on our website. On this site you can download and print pictures.

## Spending Money

There is no need for campers to bring money to camp. All food and snacks will be provided. Camp Kekoka is not responsible for any lost or stolen money.



## Health Center/Medications

Campers check in all prescribed medications with the Director upon arrival to camp. All medications must be in the original container. No medications are allowed in cabins (except inhalers for some asthmatics and EpiPens). Please fill out the medication form and bring it with you.

Cabin counselors observe campers daily for cleanliness, cuts, sunburn, insect bites, etc.

At the end of the session, the remaining prescription medications need to be picked up from the Director. All prescription medications and hospital care during camp are billed to parents. General medications and first aid materials are provided at no cost. Accident insurance is not included in the camp fee.

### Medication Administration

Summer Camp Leadership staff will administer prescription medication provided in the original container and listed on the Emergency/Medical form in the medication fields. All medication must be turned in to the Summer Camp leadership staff and Resident Nurse. Only the Summer Camp leadership staff and assigned supervisors will administer medication, except emergency medications such as EpiPens and inhalers, which will be kept with your camper or their counselor. Medication will be administered per doctor's orders only. If the dosage has changed from what is listed on the bottle, please bring in a doctor's statement indicating proper administration and dosage.

Please Note: if the medication dosage is required to be cut in any way, please do this before camp. Per Medical Administration Training, our staff cannot cut or change the prescribed medication.

Camp Leadership staff may also administer certain over-the-counter medications if parental permission is given on the Emergency/Medical Form. These medications may include hydrocortisone, generic cough drops, Children's Tylenol, aloe, and antibiotic cream.

For COVID-19 policy and procedures for the 2023 camp season, please see the final pages of this document.

## FIRST TIME CAMPER/HOMESICKNESS

Homesickness is common at all ages and is a natural response to being separated from loved ones and a normal routine at home. Parents, siblings, grandparents, and friends all are affected by homesickness, also known as separation anxiety. Parents and guardians can help their camper adjust to camp by following the simple steps outlined by our trained staff.

### 1. Mentally prepare your camper for overnight camp

Before the big day arrives, discuss the summer camp program with your child. Go over the website together, look at the photos, and try to get familiar with what the routing will consist of.

Some overnight campers have never spent a night away from their parents. This means first-time campers might feel uncomfortable, awkward, or scared.

Prepare them mentally by sending them away for sleepovers with trusted friends and relatives. The most important part is not to pick them up and take them home if they call you in the middle of the night. This would not be a fun adventure if you were to allow this during the summer.

## **2. Do all the practical jobs**

Make sure you have an honest and open line of communication with the Camp Directors. Whether your child is taking medication, sleepwalks or occasionally wets the bed; disclose all details before camp begins. There is a space on your registration form to disclose just that. Our counselors will read through all notes before your camper arrives to ensure a smooth transition.

## **3. Let your camper take charge**

In many ways, the overnight experience is about your child pushing boundaries and becoming more independent. So, let them take charge of the preparations- with your assistance, of course. Letting your camper take control in these few ways below will also allow them to visualize what their camp experience will be like.

Shop together for supplies. Have them pick out practical items they should need, and let them take a few fun things. We have weekly themes, and we encourage our campers to bring theme-specific clothes/items.

After you have gotten everything from the packing list, pack everything together. We suggest you leave a checklist with all the items packed to ensure when they pack up on Friday morning. They do not accidentally leave anything behind. Their counselor will help them with this task.

## **4. Have a pep talk**

As a first-time camper staying at an overnight camp, your camper will no doubt feel at least a little bit nervous. This is natural and several other newbies at the summer camp will be feeling the same way.

Please give them a pep talk before camp begins. Let them know the first few days might be challenging, but by pushing past their comfort zone, they will grow emotionally and have the adventure of a lifetime.

Try to address any concerns and fears they may have. Keep positive, yet be realistic; otherwise, at first sight of an issue, they will call you to pick them up.

We also encourage you to participate in our Open House, in-person or virtually. These are opportunities for you and your camper to hear from our Camp staff team and ask any



lingering questions. You can always call our camp office for more specific and private questions.

## **5. Make exciting goals**

Brainstorm with your first-time camper about what positive and realistic goals they have. Try to list five specific goals about what they want to do during summer camp. For instance, go down the zip line, make a friend, and learn a new skill and craft. Your camper will hear this phrase consistently throughout their week, Stay Awesome, Stay Found. These four simple words remind our campers to step outside their comfort zone and find something new.

Remember to write a letter. We utilize an online program called Bunk1, where you can see photos of your camper and send them virtual letters. Check out Bunk1 on our parent resource page.

## **6. Give them a taste of home**

Overnight camp is an incredible adventure filled with fun from start to finish, but it does not mean homesickness will not come into the equation now and again. When you are packing together, add a couple of photos from home.

Additionally, pack them with some stationery. We know a week is a short time to receive your campers' letters in time, so we do not suggest sending them stamps. We take campers' letters daily and scan and email them to you so you can reply by the next day through Bunk1.

We also suggest your camper bring a personal journal, so they can have something where they can jot down their feelings at the end of the day. This is a cathartic opportunity for nervous campers or even high-energy campers.

## **7. Do not spoil their experience**

Do not make promises that will spoil their overall camp experience.

For example, do not promise to pick them up early if they are not having a good time. Even if they struggle with homesickness for a while, the results will be a new-found confidence if they stick it out. However, if you give them a 'get out of jail free' card, they will not give camp a chance, not only this summer, but in the future as well.

## **8. Overnight camp is not just for kids**

Yes, this is about parents now. You deserve some "me time". Take this opportunity for freedom while your camper(s) are gone. Whether you take a vacation, meet some friends, or go out for dinner, enjoy your time to recharge before the parental routine starts up again.

## 9. Short and sweet goodbyes

Drop-off day for summer camp is exciting yet daunting. The seemingly fast process may leave you and your camper feeling anxious.

However, whatever you do, do not engage in a long goodbye. If you drag it out, your camper might feel sad and guilty. Keep it together, and give them a farewell that is full of excitement and hope.

We do not allow our parents to go to the camper's cabin for this reason. We know parents love helping set up their campers' bunk, but the faster your camper gets involved with fellow campers and activities, the better it will be.

We hope this helps you and your camper feel excited about their new experience with us! If you have any other questions, please reach out to our camp office staff:

Administrative Coordinator, Leslie Walsh at [lwalsh@ymcavp.org](mailto:lwalsh@ymcavp.org)

Administrative Coordinator, Eric Schaefer at [eschaefer@ymcavp.org](mailto:eschaefer@ymcavp.org)

Resident Camp Executive Director, Ana Mae Morrow at [anamae.morrow@ymcavp.org](mailto:anamae.morrow@ymcavp.org)