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## The Republican.

### Summer camps to suit every kid

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For kids who dream of becoming pop stars, the people behind "American Idol" recently announced that they will be running an "Idol Camp" for teeny-boppers ages 12 to 15 on the grounds of the Northfield-Mount Hermon School in Northfield this summer.

In fact, these days there seems to be a summer camp for anything a kid could want.

High achiever? Overweight? Artistic? Theatrical? Disabled? Religious? Musical? Athletic? Computer geek? There are specialty camps all over the country, and many, like the Idol Camp, are right here in Western Massachusetts.

Camp Kingsmont, a weight-loss camp for children, serves about 300 children every summer on the campus of Hampshire College in Amherst.

The camp was founded in 1971, when former Olympic wrestler and West Point professor Lloyd Appleton decided that every child deserved a happy and positive camping experience.

As a result, Camp Kingsmont not only teaches good eating habits, but devotes itself to bolstering confidence and self-respect in children 7-17 who might otherwise feel marginalized by their weight.

Sessions are offered throughout the summer for a minimum of three weeks. "We're looking to modify some habits, and that takes time," says director Marc A. Manoli, who was a Kingsmont camper himself as a child. Fee: \$2,999-\$5,999.

And how's this for a minority among teenagers? Those who are wild about organ music. Kids 13-18 can look forward to a summer camp called the Pipe Organ Encounter (POE), scheduled to take place on the Smith College campus in Northampton July 22-27.

For \$375, youngsters get field trips, lessons, recitals, pizza, ice cream, dorm beds and a chance to spend time with some of the most distinguished organists in the country.

E. Lary Grossman of Hatfield is POE director for the Springfield Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, which sponsors six POEs every summer in different parts of the country.

Grossman says he spent a day at a POE a few years ago when it came to Worcester. "It was one of the most wonderful days I ever had," he says, "seeing the kids totally excited."

Summer camps traditionally involve lots of outdoor activities. But for kids who

want to focus on one sport in particular, those kinds of specialty camps are available, too.

Take canoeing, for example. Camp Massasoit at Springfield College offers a canoeing camp for children

13-15 from July 9 to 20.

The last five days of the camp are sleep-aways, with the daytime in between spent traveling on the water. Swimming ability is one of the requirements. Fee: \$500.

Parents of disabled children look for a camp where their child won't be made fun of because he is "different." Fortunately, there are specialty camps that welcome children with cerebral palsy, autism, Down syndrome and many other afflictions.

One of these is Camp Howe in Goshen, which is celebrating its 80th birthday this year. It has been serving disabled children since 1932.

"They are integrated into every aspect of the camp," says Terrie J. Campbell, director at Camp Howe. The activities of these innovative camps are very traditional - from swimming and volleyball to cookouts and crafts.

Some Howe campers go home at the end of the day, but all of them, including the disabled campers, can register to stay overnight in cabins with other children.

"We're a good mix of old and new," says Campbell. Last year, the camp served 600 children, 100 at a time. Sixteen percent of them were disabled. Fees range from \$250 to \$575 a week.

Another camp for the disabled is Abilities Unlimited Kamp for Kids, which recently moved its operation to the grounds of Camp Togowauk in Westfield.

A two-week session costs \$700, and everybody goes home at the end of the day.

Like Camp Howe, Kamp for Kids provides extra support for its campers with disabilities. "We have a very low camper-to-staff ratio," says Julissa I. Colon, administrative assistant at Kamp for Kids, adding that staff is practiced in everything from bathroom skills to tube feedings.

Campbell and Colon both say that able-bodied campers are enriched by the presence of their disabled campmates.

"It gives them an opportunity to see that the kids who seem different in school are not so different from themselves," says Colon. "Timmy in the wheelchair likes to play baseball, too. It's one of the most important things our camp does."

"It's so rewarding," says Campbell. "Running an 'inclusive' camp benefits all of our campers. It shows that all of us have strengths and weaknesses and can be members of the community."

Even some generalized summer camps are offering specialty options. Among these is Camp Bonnie Brae in East Otis, the longest continuously running Girl Scout Camp in the United States, which is sponsored by Girl Scouts of Pioneer Valley.

In addition to its classic camp activities, Bonnie Brae is offering three- to 12-day specialty camps on such themes as "Earth Watch," "Art for Life," "Lake George Sailing," "Biking and Sea-Kayaking on Cape Cod," and many others.

Fees range from \$145-\$400. Like many other summer camps, Bonnie Brae has financial aid options available.

One of the most popular day camps in the area is the two-week Dan Kane singing camp in Westfield. Although the singing camp is already sold out, Kane still has openings in his new summer band camp, which runs July 16-27. Cost is \$300.

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