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Revamped summer camps accepting children

By Theresa Java Free Press Staff

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UPPER KEYS — As Monroe County reopens the economy and eases COVID-19-related restrictions, many parents are heading back to work only to worry over if they can safely send their already restless children to summer camps.

Although camps are going to look different this year with smaller groups spread out in the fields and pools, the kids will still be at play.

Summer camps, which have implemented COVID-19 safety protocols adhering to CDC guidelines, may take kids' and staff temperatures daily, enforce frequent hand washing and clean shared equipment daily. As for pools, there is no evidence that COVID-19 can spread to people through the water in pools, hot tubs or water playgrounds, according to the CDC.

While there are hundreds of virtual online camps, which may better suit some families, here are a few traditional camps in the area:

- The Upper Keys YMCA is offering summer camps from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday with before and after camp care available. Campers are asked to bring a reusable water bottle, a healthy lunch and two snacks, sunscreen and a hat. For more information, contact Jessica Beiermeister at 954-732-6869.
- Dolphins Plus Bayside is offering weeklong marine science summer camp for ages 6 to 10. Campers learn many subjects through hands-on science-based activities including local ecology and dolphin communication and behavior, marine mammal lessons and shows, and coastal exploration.

Camp weeks begin Monday, June 22, and run weeklong through July 13. Camp hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with before and after care options available. The cost is \$350 per student per week with discounts available for first responders.

Dolphins Plus Bayside is also offering a Junior Dolphin Explorers Summer Camp program for ages 11 to 14.

This is a camp for dolphin lovers and budding marine scientists. Campers will investigate dolphin intelligence, flukes and flippers, majestic manatees, and how to help stranded marine mammals. Each day will be filled with hands-on learning activities, marine mammal lessons and demonstrations, behind-the-scenes tours and coastal exploration.

The next junior camp will be offered July 20.

Attendees of both camp programs are asked to bring attire for outdoor activities and swimming, and ample sunscreen. Campers should bring a lunch kept cool in an insulated lunchbox, a towel, mosquito repellent, a hat, sunglasses, water shoes and a camera

For more information, find dolphin-summer-camp on dolphinsplus.com, call 1-866-860-7946 or e-mail marylou@dolphinsplus.com.

- Registration to various camps held at Founders Park in Islamorada is available now.

Junior Tennis Camps are being offered for the weeks beginning June 22, July 6, July 13, July 20 and Aug. 3. A full day from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for \$195 per week and a half day from 9 a.m. until noon for \$100 per week will be offered to ages 6 and older. Camp includes tennis instruction, swimming, Olympics matches, dodgeball and sports. Pizza will be offered on Fridays. For details, contact USTA Professionals Susie Jannach at 954-290-7502 or Greg Pearson 517-285-5693.

Synchro Splash Camps will be offered during those same weeks to swimmers ages 6 to 14. Hours are from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m and the cost is \$150 per week. Campers will learn introductory synchronized swimming techniques and water games. For more information, contact Isla Crawford 856-473-4752.

Swim & Dive Combo Camp will be offered the weeks of June 22, July 20 and July 27 for campers older than age 6. Swim clinic includes stroke technique, starts, turns, water games and land activities. A springboard dive clinic includes basic introductory to springboard diving and dry land training. Hours

are from 9 a.m. till noon and the cost is \$200 per week. For more information, contact coaches Jon Olsen at 305-393-5855 or Kelly Kater at 215-622-6841.

Summer Swim Camp will be offered the week of July 6 for campers above age 6 to learn stroke technique, starts, turns, racing, water games and dry land activities. A pizza party takes place on Friday. Hours are 9 to 11:30 a.m. The cost is \$150 per session. For more information, contact Olsen at 305-393-5855.

Limited space is available to the above camps and campers must be preregistered. There is no drop-ins or same day registration. Contactless registration is preferred. Download the registration form at <https://tinyurl.com/y9rveane> and email completed forms to ifp@islamorada.fl.us. Once camp forms are received, a credit card payment can be processed via phone. Call the park office at 305-853-1685.

Founders Park is also offering small group camp activities on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

The first group activity begins Tuesday, June 30, for ages 6 to 12. The time will be announced. Two-hour activity sessions may include arts and crafts, drawing and painting, sports, scavenger hunts and ranger programs, beach activities, games and more. The cost is \$10 per activity session. For more information, contact recreational program leader Justin Haggerty at 305-853-1685.

- The Florida Keys Children's Shelter's Jelsema Journey Camp is offering its free summer camp program for at-risk Monroe County youth ages 10 to 17. Camp sessions will be offered July 11 to 18, July 18 to 25 and July 25 to Aug. 1. There are limited spaces available.

Daily outings like rollerblading and horseback riding are partially funded by a grant from the Community Foundation of the Florida Keys. Recreation, life skills and educational programming are made possible with funding from the Ocean Reef Community Foundation. All other costs, including transportation to and from the Lower and Middle Keys, are covered by the Helen's Hope Foundation along with county, state and federal grants.

For more information, contact Sebastian Rivera at 305-432-1218 or Christi Shortes at 305-852-2882, ext. 239.

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