

Happy Campers

Programs at clubs across the country are helping kids (and parents) while away the dog days of summer through engaging activities and lessons in nutrition and health.

By Brandi Shaffer, Associate Editor

PHOTO COURTESY OF RANCHO VIEJO RESORT & CC

SUMMING IT UP

■ Offering a variety of activities keeps kids interested in the club, which can lead to ongoing participation in member activities throughout the year.

- Help kids make healthy choices by explaining the basics of nutrition.
- Hiring staff who are enthusiastic about working with children will infuse your summer camp program with the energy it needs to keep kids engaged.

Clubs aren't just for golfing dads anymore—they're appealing to the whole family through social memberships, fitness centers and swimming instruction. But with school out of session and gorgeous weather creeping in, summertime is kid time all over the country.

Clubs are not only giving kids a place to hang out during the dog days of summer, they're keeping them active and healthy in the process, by establishing positive habits in a welcoming environment.

Just for Kids

Some clubs, like Blacksburg (Va.) Country Club, now hire staff solely to handle youth programs. Danielle Williams, Youth and Recreation Director, spearheaded the club's summer camp program five years ago. From the beginning, she never had trouble getting kids to show up.

"The first thing we learned was how popular it was," Williams says. "It filled so quickly, we didn't

know what to do. We only had so many tennis courts, so we had to add weeks."

The private, member-owned club prides itself on being young and family-oriented. Located near Virginia Tech University, it takes its role in the community so seriously, it started its annual summer camp a week early this year, to accommodate an early end to the school year due to a lack of snow.

The central location for the aquatics, art, golf and tennis programs is a multipurpose room in the pool house, where Williams keeps kids engaged by breaking up the day into 30-minute segments. "If you try to do anything, even playing in the pool, for 2 ½ hours, they'll get bored," Williams adds.

Because Williams is a registered dietician, helping kids make healthy choices is part of the program, with sides of fruits, vegetables and yogurt parfaits always available. The club also offers a kids' gourmet menu, consisting of smaller portions of adult fare.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BLACKSBURG CC



The overwhelming popularity of Blacksburg Country Club's summer camp program required Youth and Recreation Director Danielle Williams, (left photo, on right), to add weeks onto the program and turn away non-members.



“We’re teaching the whole child,
versus just teaching mechanics.”

—Wendy Werley Bullock,
Rancho Viejo Resort & Country Club

“They can make choices, but there are really only healthy choices,” Williams says.

Though keeping kids active and busy is important to maintain interest, Williams says the vitality of the program relies on paying attention to what kids want—and being flexible.

“Over the years, we’ve learned what kids enjoy and what they don’t,” she says. “By the end of the day, the kids are fried, and they just want to play.”

At the end of each season, Williams’ team of 25 examines what efforts worked and what didn’t, to prepare for the following summer. Ultimately, a dedicated staff makes all the difference in creating a summer camp program that members want. “Having me here full-time was huge,” Williams says. “Not everyone has that luxury, but hiring someone even just for the summer is very important.”



Cheyenne Kidz Camp’s newly created day camp at CC of Colorado incorporates lessons in nutrition through culinary activities and learning to read and understand food labels.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CC OF COLORADO

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At Rancho Viejo Resort & CC, Director of Sports and Wellness Wendy Werley Bullock (far right) uses visual aids to help teach basic golf and fitness techniques.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RANCHO VIEJO RESORT & CC

an overhaul is necessary. Cheyenne Kidz Camp at the Country Club of Colorado in Colorado Springs relaunched its summer camp program two years ago to incorporate healthier options, more structure and more activities.

CC of Colorado offers camps for golf, aquatics and tennis, as well as the newly created day camp. This year, the program merged four different camps; after meeting in the morning in a big tent, kids split off into their niche groups.

Cheyenne Day Camp starts each day with exercise with a certified instructor, such as boot camp, yoga or sand volleyball, before moving on to art projects, woodworking, science experiments and team building.

On Mondays, the club incorporates culinary activities to create homemade granola bars, smoothies with fruit and yogurt, healthy pizza, trail mix, fresh fruit kabobs and healthy cookies. The kids also learn how to read food labels and discuss healthy snack options.

“Everyone is more health-oriented now,” says Mickey Walters, Lead Manager for Cheyenne Kidz Camp. “[Parents] want the kids to be outside and active rather than inside with TVs, so we’ve geared [the program] towards that.”

Wendy Werley Bullock began working with Rancho Viejo (Texas) Resort & Country Club’s summer camp this year and has jumped in with both feet by employing the nutrition plan of Dr. Bill Sears. Werley Bullock, Director of Sports and Wellness, became a certified LEAN (Lifestyle, Exercise, Attitude & Nutrition) coach in 2008 and uses that curriculum, developed by Sears.

“To my knowledge, there’s nobody in the country doing what I’m doing in

terms of integrating nutrition and hitting all these areas,” says Werley Bullock. “We’re teaching the whole child, versus just teaching mechanics.”

For example, Werley Bullock teaches kids about “traffic light eating” and portion control; “green light” foods include fruits and vegetables, “yellow light” foods are whole grains, lean meat and low-fat cheese, and “red light” foods are sugar and fast food.

“What’s so exciting to hear is when parents come in and are impressed with kids reading food labels and they know high-fructose corn syrup is bad,” Werley Bullock says. “When you involve them, they’re pretty engaged.”

Campers receive three hours of golf and tennis instruction, a healthy lunch, nutrition segments and fitness classes. Each camper is assessed to determine their level of fitness, so activities can be



Summer Camp Advice

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR CLUBS LOOKING TO START A SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM?

Danielle Williams, Blacksburg CC: Ask members what they want and just jump in. If you can only do it one week to start with, see how it goes.

Mickey Walters, CC of Colorado: Get to know your members to see what they’re looking for, and cater to who’s there first. Start with what you know.

Wendy Werley Bullock, Rancho Viejo Resort & CC: The people in charge should absolutely love children, have patience and come up with different games. It’s so different from teaching adults; language is very different.

Kevin Chance, River Place CC: Maintain consistency year to year. We try to engage quality people to stay with us summer to summer. Counselor interaction with parents is important as well, so hire collegiate and high-school athletes who are socially advanced and good leaders.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RIVER PLACE CC

River Place CC in Austin, Texas has expanded its kids programming so much since 2005, it now offers combined camps, where campers can choose from different activities in the morning and in the afternoon. The year-round menu now includes traditional golf, aquatics and tennis, plus an outdoor camp, fitness boot camp, hip hop, cheerleading, ballet and even a Lego camp.

catered to individual needs.

Werley Bullock, an LPGA Golf Professional, says distractions are not a problem during golf lessons because she uses visual teaching aids, such as a hula hoop standing up in a base filled with sand for chipping practice.

“It’s all about kids having fun, learning through play and games that are appropriate to them and a lot of fundamental movement—throwing balls, tossing games,” Werley Bullock says.

Kevin Chance, River Place’s General Manager, heads the Outdoor Adventure Camp, which incorporates hiking, outdoor games, scavenger hunts and fishing. Moving around outdoors in the Texas summer heat is a great time to teach nutrition lessons, Chance says.

“With the drought and heat, we integrate hydration and snacks that aren’t just sugary treats,” he notes. “I had 15 kids hiking three miles, and we had fresh fruit

along the trail, talked about fueling our bodies the night before, eating a healthy breakfast, all about proteins and carbs.”

Like many clubs, River Place gives out prizes and awards at the end of every summer camp season—and sometimes every week—to reward campers for learning as much as possible outside of the classroom.

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Year-Round Payoffs

Successful summer programming can often help position clubs as go-to places for kids throughout the year. That’s certainly been the experience of River Place Country Club in Austin, Texas, which now offers year-round programs that are proving to be a constant draw for kids.

River Place still has plenty of camp options, too. Campers can now stay engaged, in fact, with “combined camps,” where the day is divided into two parts, with different offerings for the morning and afternoon. A camper can choose to focus on tennis or golf in the morning and then attend teen boot camp or hip hop camp in the afternoon.

When River Place started its camp in 2005, the club offered traditional golf and tennis programming. But the brochure has expanded and evolved over the years to accommodate members’ requests and abilities. For example, one of the club’s members is a former Texas Longhorns cheerleader who offered to run the cheerleading camp.

“We want [kids of all ages] to be here with their families and active,” says Jackie Mohr, Fitness Director. “For kids who were four years old when we began our camps, we need to offer the same experience when they’re 12.”

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