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ENC Presidents' Week Camp to stretch young minds as they explore the outdoors



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Courtesy of ENC

Want a great way for your child to spend a week off from school in the great outdoors that's practically in your own backyard? Boredom or homebound just went out the window with the freedom and sheer exuberance of being in nature.

Youngsters will see, learn and delight in the awesomeness of nature at the Environmental Nature Center's Presidents' Week Nature Fun Camp for Kids. The camp welcomes children in kindergarten through 6th grade with age-designed outdoor crafts and activities.

According to Alex Zaphiris, an M.D. in Mill Valley, kids who spend time in nature are healthier and smarter because their brains are reacting to the experience moment by moment and their bodies are more alive. "The benefits of children being in nature are on many levels," Zaphiris said. "It's a whole-body experience that's healing."

The camp runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. starting Monday, Feb. 19, to Thursday, Feb. 22. The four-day camp costs \$265 and includes lunch. A half-day camp is also available, which ends at 1 p.m., at \$180 for the session, lunch included. There's a 10 percent discount for ENC members.

Campers will experience crafts and activities designed for their age, and explore and make natural crafts to take home using tools made from materials found in nature, such as making string from native plants, weaving and mask making. They'll explore the natural world, including traveling back in time and going on a "Native American Adventure" to learn about the tools, trade and customs of the native people of the Tongva (Gabrielino) and Acjachemen (Juaneño) people of Orange County. They'll sing and play music using authentic Tongva instruments. They will see, touch and smell the plants used centuries ago.

At the ENC, campers will be given the freedom to explore, imagine and make their own fun. They'll be given boundaries, a few supplies, a set of ground rules and supervision. They'll be able to talk, laugh and have a great time while creating things like rock towers, stick-and-leaf boats and forts. Materials will be provided to campers to draw, paint, make tassels and play board games.

The week will fly by and they'll leave with renewed energy, more alert minds and happier spirits to finish out the school year.

For more information, become an ENC member or to register your child, call the Environmental Nature Center at 949.645.8489 or visit www.encycenter.org.

Environmental Nature Center is located at 1601 16th St., Newport Beach.