Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

Fort Drum Child and Youth Services Gearing Up for Safe Summer Fun

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- The school year is close to an end, and children will soon leave their classrooms and remote learning environments for a well-deserved break.

The Fort Drum Child and Youth Services staff is ready to provide activities to keep youths active, engaged and social all summer long.

“Last summer we were limited to the things we could do with our children because of the pandemic,” said Robin Banks, CYS chief. “But because some of those measures have been lifted now, you’re going to see more things opening up again. We’re able to restart programs we normally would have, while still mitigating for COVID-19 and being safe about it.”

The summer programs available through CYS Sports and Fitness, School Age Center and the Youth Center have something for everyone, whether it is hitting bull’s-eyes in archery camp, learning 3D printing or building a robot out of Legos.

Joshua Herzig, CYS Sports and Fitness assistant director, anticipates a welcome change from a year ago when no athletics were offered.

“We are opening up our CYS sports summer camps for registration starting May 26,” he said. “I think that registering kids to our programs gives them opportunities to get outside and be active, while making friendly relationships with kids they may never have met otherwise.”

Herzig said that the camps also give children a chance to either try something they have never experienced before or strengthen skills in a sport they are already active in through school athletics or youth leagues.

“Year in and year out, we look for camps we can run that will be successful, and over the course of 10 years we’ve added or removed a few camps,” Herzig said. “We do our best to put out a product we feel will be successful, and that families will enjoy.”

Col. Jeffery Lucas, Fort Drum garrison commander, said that he applauds the efforts being done to help set children up for a productive summer.

“The last year has been hard for us all, but especially so for our children,” Lucas said. “There is something about summer break that sets the tone for the upcoming school year, and we hope these quality-of-life programs get us going in a great direction.”

Banks said that what appears like fun and games for children has greater intentions.

“All the programs available to our youths over the summer – it’s mind stimulation, it’s keeping them active, it’s developing skills,” Banks said. “If they don’t continue to hone in on those activities throughout the summer, it becomes a struggle for them once the new school year starts. It’s also developing their social skills, because they interact with friends and new people, and they’re building these relationships so once they return to school they won’t be so fearful in that environment.”

Lucas said that as more events and activities become available in the coming months, it is everyone’s hope that conditions continue to improve where children can be reintegrated into classrooms in September.

“We’ve been in constant communication with BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) and local school district leadership during the pandemic, and we know – and appreciate – that they’re working hard to get all children back to a full-time, in-person academic setting in September,” he said.

Until then, Banks said that community members can visit the FMWR website or call any of the facilities to find out what CYS has to offer now.

“I am very happy that we are able to support our children this way,” she said. “And I’m excited to see what’s going to come as we move forward. Even though the pandemic is still here, and we have all seen how that has hindered our lives and what we are able to do, we were still able to adjust and adapt to it. As restrictions continue to be lifted, we’re able to do even more. So, watch out, here comes CYS!”

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