

# Summer camp looks different for 2020 due to COVID-19

By Jodi Schneider  
Correspondent

Many camps are canceled across the region, some are moving to a virtual-only format, and others are opening with limited capacity and guidelines for the prevention of COVID-19 spread.

Outdoor arts and crafts, washing hands and social distancing — Sisters Park & Recreation District (SPRD) summer camps must adjust for coronavirus.

Executive Director Jennifer Holland told *The Nugget*, “We are looking forward to offering both our very own day camps as well as specialty camps that we contract out with other agencies to bring fun and exciting opportunities to Sisters youth.”

SPRD’s day camps, Camp Juniper and Camp Ponderosa, had to be redesigned to State summer program guidance in relation to COVID-19. Changes for this summer included reduction in hours, dividing campers into stable groups of no more than 10, increasing disinfection of equipment, eliminating shared supplies, etc.

“We are reworking our drop off and pick up of campers,” Holland said. “This will now take place outside of the Coffield Center. Each camper will be screened daily including a temperature check prior to entering the building. Additionally, campers will need to wash their hands thoroughly before coming into the building. For now, the Coffield Center will be designated for day-camp kids and SPRD staff only. Parents will not be allowed to enter the building and the center will remain closed to other walk-in patrons.”

Camps are slated to begin the week of June 22, assuming no major changes in circumstances.

COVID-19 has pushed

SPRD staff to think outside the box and find creative solutions to the ever-changing requirements.

Holland said, “We felt, if given the go-ahead from the State to run summer camps this year, it was our duty to provide this service for our families. We are so excited to have kids in the building again. Even though camp will be different than in the past, I know we will have a fun and exciting program for kids this summer.”

Staff is reworking the planned curriculum to meet new requirements. In addition to trying to spend more time outside, the day camps will also be working with Sisters Elementary School to see what fun learning activities they can embed into the program this year to support summer learning.

“We want to support our schools as much as possible and make sure kiddos are prepared for this new year,” Holland said.

There is scientific data to support that camp experiences right now are important to help create a sense of normalcy for kids during COVID-19.

Carissa Gascon, day-camp site coordinator said, “We are extremely excited to be able to help families during these uncertain times. We know that everyone has been faced with different challenges.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Last year’s SPRD summer camps are a distant, pre-COVID-19 memory. The structure of camps has to be adapted for this summer.

Some families are needing care to allow for parents to get some work time, others are looking for safe opportunities for their children to socialize. SPRD has always focused on the community’s needs when making our programming decisions.”

The day camps will be focusing their activities on nature. Each week will be a different theme such as plants, insects, birds, and animals. They will also be learning about other aspects of nature such as life cycle, water cycle, importance of diversity in our forest, animal, and plant adaptations.

All camps, day or specialty, will divide kids into stable groups of 10.

Holland said, “We are asking our parents to make sure their kiddos understand new expectations that will be in place including social distancing, increased hand washing, not sharing of supplies, etc. prior to the first day of camp. Staff will teach and reteach this to campers as it can always still be a struggle to remember six feet distance.”

She added, “Per state guidelines, campers will not be required to wear masks, but it will be highly encouraged. As for day camps, we will be setting up the rooms with a designated area for individual campers. This will be where they eat lunch, do their crafts, etc. Each camper

will be assigned a basket that they will use for the week to store their personal items in. Each camper will also have a supply bag that they keep in their basket. In this bag will be all the items they need for the week. This will aid us in making sure there is not sharing of supplies. We will use additional signage throughout the building and on the floor, so campers remember what six feet looks like. When outside, we will use items like cones, hula-hoops or pool noodles to ensure proper spacing.

“Safety will remain the number one priority for summer camps and all programs as we move into this new territory.”

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