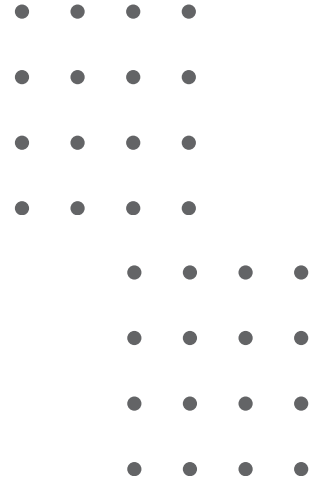




# 2026

## Overnight Camp

### Family Guide



8

WEEKS TO PLAY

50+

ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE



## Welcome Families!

Greetings from the sunny shores of Lake Wylie!

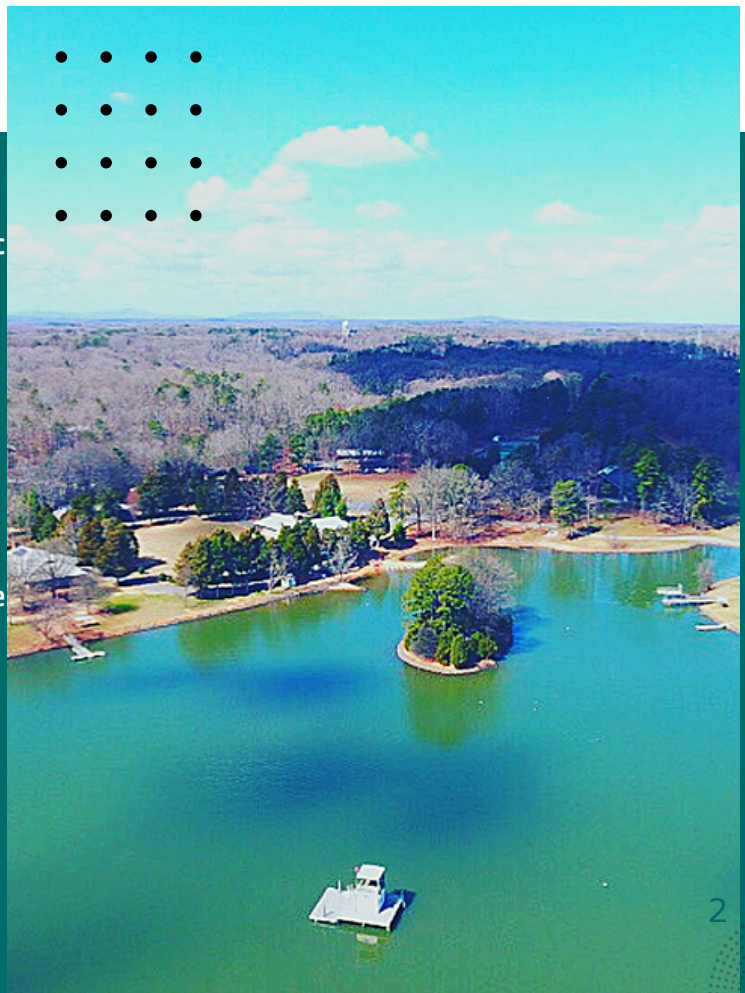
First and foremost – thank you for choosing YMCA Camp Thunderbird as your camper’s summer destination. We are committed to creating an unforgettable experience, making sure each camper has a safe, fun summer full of growth and excitement. We believe in creating an environment that fosters self-discovery, collaboration, skill development, and strong relationships. We’re so excited to welcome new campers and welcome home our returning families. Summer 2026 will be one for the books!


In preparation for the summer, we’ve created this guide to provide essential information and answer commonly asked questions. We are always available to help with other questions you may have – we are your partners in preparing your camper for a successful and memorable session!

## Legacy

For 90 years, Camp Thunderbird has shaped the lives of thousands of campers, welcoming children from around the world to experience the true magic of camp. Since opening in 1936 as the Observer Fresh Air Camp and later becoming part of the YMCA family in the late 1950s, our legacy has been rooted in growth, adventure, and connection.

Today, we proudly serve over 2,000 overnight campers each summer, taking advantage of 100 acres of private property that stretches along three miles of beautiful Lake Wylie shoreline. As a traditional camp, we empower each camper to choose their own path—exploring a wide range of activities and challenges designed to build confidence, strengthen skills, and support growth physically, emotionally, and mentally.





# Camper Code of Conduct

At Camp Thunderbird, we are rooted in our pillars of inclusion, positivity, and character development. To ensure the best possible experience for everyone, all campers are expected to respect themselves, others, camp equipment, and our environment.

We expect all members of our community to refrain from the following behaviors:

- Use of abusive or inappropriate language
- Physical aggression or unwanted physical contact
- Threatening or intimidating others
- Harassment of any kind
- Theft of or damage to camp property
- Possession or use of illegal substances, including vapes, e-cigarettes, and alcohol
- Engaging in behavior that puts themselves or others at risk

We know mistakes will happen. If and when a situation occurs, our approach will be to lead with curiosity, learning each individual's perspective. We will make every effort to help campers reflect with empathy, understand accountability, and move forward positively. Our goal is to maintain a safe, supportive community where every camper can thrive.

## Bullying Policy

**YMCA Code of Conduct-** the YMCA is committed to providing a safe, comfortable and welcoming environment for all. We expect persons using the YMCA programs and facilities to behave in a mature and responsible way, and to respect the rights and dignity of others.

**Bullying behavior is not in line with our beliefs and Code of Conduct and will be addressed.**

**YMCA Camp Thunderbird will make every effort to offer restorative opportunities for any camper who does not follow the expectations outlined above, however, we reserve the right to dismiss any camper whose behavior is affecting the safety and wellbeing of others or themselves. In that rare event, the camper's parent or authorized adult will be expected to coordinate an early pick up. Session fees will not be refunded.**



# Preparing for Camp

To help make planning as simple as possible for our families, we've created a quick checklist below to help ensure the whole family is prepared for camp.

## Camp Registration & Information (the paperwork!)

- Complete registration
- Add drop-off and pick-up dates to calendar
- Review cancellation and refund policy
- Pay camp balance - final fees due by May 15
- Complete all assigned forms and uploads in UltraCamp
- List any cabin mate requests in UltraCamp
- List all medications in UltraCamp
- Register with PackMyRx, submit all required information - due at least 30 days before session start

## Session Preparation (the organizing & talking!)

- Talk to your camper about what to expect (everything from schedule to homesickness to trying new things)
- Discuss any cabin mate requests
- Help your camper identify their preferred activities
- Review the Camper Code of Conduct together
- Practice mastering self-care skills independently (showering, organizing belongings, making bed)
- Help your camper memorize their full name and date of birth
- Review packing list and label all items
- Share your excitement and confidence with your camper!

## Opening Day (time to go!)

- Double check packing & labeling of all items
- Eat a good lunch before arrival
- Arrive during the assigned drop-off window
- Prepare for a confident, positive goodbye (keep it short and reassuring)

## Registration, Changes, and Cancellations

Registration is managed through your YMCA Single Sign-on (SSO) account, which you can login to at [www.campthunderbird.org](http://www.campthunderbird.org). If you haven't set up your SSO account, you can do so by following these steps:

- Go to [www.campthunderbird.org](http://www.campthunderbird.org) and click "Log In" in the top right corner.
- Select "[Setup/Login with Single Sign On \(SSO\)](#)".
- Click "Sign Up".
- Enter your email address — you'll receive a 6-digit verification code. Enter that code.
- Create your new password.
- Enter your first name, last name, and date of birth then click "Continue."

Once logged in, you'll be able to view each person on your account, corresponding registrations, payment schedules, payment methods, etc. This is also where you will access UltraCamp (the accounts are integrated).

If you have a change in plans and need to request a cancellation or change of session, please visit our Customer Support Hub to do so. You can find it by clicking "Contact Us" on your account page, or visiting [tinyurl.com/YMCACustomerSupportHub](http://tinyurl.com/YMCACustomerSupportHub). We must receive cancellation requests in writing through the Customer Support Hub - we can not process cancellations over a phone call or email.

### Refund Policy:

Before September 1, 2025 - Full refund, including deposit will be issued

September 1, 2025 - May 14, 2026 - Deposit is forfeited, refund of remaining balance paid will be issued

May 15, 2026 and After - No refund issued, total balance will be owed

## UltraCamp

UltraCamp is the platform where families will provide us with important information about their camper, make cabin mate requests, select activities, send communication to your camper during their session, and more.

UltraCamp is integrated with your YMCA SSO Account. Simply login from [www.campthunderbird.org](http://www.campthunderbird.org), then click the blue "UltraCamp Login" button just above the "My Details" section on the page.

You should also see an "Incomplete Tasks" notification to the right of the Primary Contact—clicking this will take you directly to all required tasks. If you do not see this notification, you can also access each requirement by selecting the menu in the top left corner and navigating to the "Document Center".

Continued on next page...

## UltraCamp Continued...

The following items are the family's responsibility in their UltraCamp account:

Required forms include:

- Camper Health Profile
- Camper Confidential
- Medication Policy Acknowledgement
- Arrival & Departure Travel Plans

Required uploads include:

- Camper Health Insurance Cards
  - In the Document Center, select "Upload Document" and proceed accordingly.

Additional required information, if applicable:

- Camper Medications (includes meds, supplements, & vitamins – both Rx and OTC)
  - From your dashboard, select your camper's name.
  - Expand the section at the bottom titled "Medications"
  - Select "Manage Medications" and proceed.
  - Thank you for adding this information both in your camper's UltraCamp profile and in your PackMyRx account.
- Cabin Mate Requests\*
  - From your dashboard, select your camper's name.
  - Expand the section at the bottom titled "Reservations"
  - Select the appropriate session
  - Expand the section at the bottom titled "Additional Information"
  - Click "Edit Information" and proceed.

\*Each camper can make up to 2 cabin mate requests. Requested friends must also make a mutual request, be attending the same session for the same duration of time, and be within 2 years of age of your camper. Generally, older campers will be aged down to meet a cabin mate request. We will do our best to accommodate cabin mate requests, but we do not guarantee same-cabin placement.

## Medication Management

Camp Thunderbird partners with PackMyRx to make medication management safe and efficient at camp. All prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and supplements must be submitted through PackMyRx at least 30 days before your camper's session. Please read through the following resources for more information.

- [PackMyRx Introduction Letter](#)
- [PackMyRx Parent Guide](#)
- [PackMyRx Prescription Guidelines](#)
- [PackMyRx Physician Letter](#)

# Arrival & Departure Planning

## Arrival & Departure Schedule by Session

- Session A - Arrive June 14, 2:00 - 5:00 PM | Depart June 27, 9:00 - 10:00 AM
- Session A2 - Arrive June 21, 2:30 - 4:00 PM | Depart June 27, 9:00 - 10:00 AM
- Session B - Arrive June 28, 2:00 - 5:00 PM | Depart July 11, 9:00 - 10:00 AM
- Session C - Arrive July 12, 2:00 - 5:00 PM | Depart July 25, 9:00 - 10:00 AM
- Session D - Arrive July 26, 2:00 - 5:00 PM | Depart August 8, 9:00 - 10:00 AM
- Session D1 - Arrive July 26, 2:00 - 5:00 PM | Depart August 1, 9:00 - 10:00 AM
- Session D2 - Arrive August 2, 2:30 - 4:00 PM | Depart August 8, 9:00 - 10:00 AM

## Arriving & Departing by Car

Camp's address is 1 Thunderbird Lane, Lake Wylie, SC 29710. Families who arrive early will be instructed to wait in line outside of our gate until the respective drop-off or pick-up window begins. Camp staff will greet cars to guide them in the right direction.

## Arriving & Departing by Airplane

We are happy to provide ground transportation between camp and Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT) in Charlotte, NC. You can arrange for airport drop-off and pick-up by completing the "Arrival & Departure Travel Plan" form for your camper in UltraCamp, following the outlined details.

Please note that campers traveling by airplane will need to have their primary camp belongings shipped to camp and back home, rather than bringing them as checked luggage.

## Departing by Bus

Taking the "Atlanta Bus" after camp has become a beloved tradition for many campers over the years! It gives campers the opportunity to enjoy those few hours of post-camp travel along with fellow campers and staff, making the transition home a little extra special.

Bus transportation is enjoyed both by Atlanta area families and those for whom Atlanta is closer to home than camp. You can arrange bus transportation for your camper by indicating that option on the "Arrival & Departure Travel Plan" form in UltraCamp.



# Packing for Camp

## What (and How) to Pack

You can find our packing list in UltraCamp! Log in and navigate to the “Document Center” – you’ll find it under “Camp Thunderbird Parent Resources.”

We strongly recommend that campers pack old play clothes and do not bring valuable, expensive, or sentimental items to Camp Thunderbird. With days full of activities, new friendships, and constant movement, items can easily be misplaced. While we make every effort to recover and return lost belongings, we cannot guarantee their return.

To help us keep track of items, please label all belongings clearly with the camper’s full name.

Things NOT to bring:

- Anything of value
- Electronic Devices such as cell phones, smart watches, game-consoles or streaming devices
- Items that may be considered weapons such as knives, launching or blasting devices
- Items that contain tobacco, including vaping devices

Additional Tips

- Trunk must be able to fit under the bed. Less than 24 inches high.
- Pack a twin bed pad for our light sleepers.
- A clip on fan is helpful for all campers.
- For our little campers, pack each set of clothes in a Ziploc bag with the day on it, so staff can help them choose clothes.

YMCA Camp Thunderbird

## Themes at Camp

In addition to our session themes, we also host fun novelty days throughout each session that campers are encouraged to participate in, but it is optional.

Novelty Days:

- Sunday – Camp Colors
- Monday – Neon
- Tuesday – Tropical
- Wednesday – Tie-Dye
- Thursday – Jersey Day
- Friday – Funky Hat Day

And don't forget, our session themes come to life during the Thunderbird Bash (Signature Sessions only), where campers celebrate in style!

## Laundry

Laundry service is offered for campers in General sessions at no extra charge. Additional services (2 or more) are offered for campers who stay for multiple sessions. We provide one laundry bag per camper to be sent on the first Thursday, and returned on Saturday morning.

## Spending Money & Valuables

No spending money is needed at Camp Thunderbird—everything, including snacks and canteen, is included in your camp fees. We ask that you do not send cash or any valuable items with your camper.

The Camp Store will be open on Opening and Closing Days during drop-off and pick-up for families. In addition, online orders can be placed and delivered directly to campers during their session for added convenience. Visit: <https://camp-thunderbird.square.site/>





# Communication

## Communication From Camp

At Camp Thunderbird, our goal is to keep you up to date and well-informed before, during and after your summer session. Below is a listing of some of the communications you can expect from Camp:

### Before Camp

- Reminder to complete ALL required forms in UltraCamp
- Reminder to complete PackMyRx orders if applicable
- Invite to selecting Land Activities in UltraCamp
- Cabin Assignments and arrival details for Opening Day

### In-Session

- Instructions on e-mailing your camper and viewing photos
- Personalized phone-calls for first time camper families and hand written letters for campers
- Checking your camper Bandana progress
- Instructions on Departure and Transportation from Camp

### After Camp

- A Thank You from Camp
- Staying connected and Camp Directory invitation
- A Call to Action for Next Summer!

## Communication to Campers

Families have the ability to communicate with campers via e-mail during their session using our camp management system, UltraCamp. Emails are printed and delivered to our campers daily. Please note that campers cannot respond via email, it is just for them to read. Please do not include extremely sensitive information in these emails incase others come across it. If you have pertinent or sensitive information to share with your child, please give us a call. To access this service, please follow these instructions:

- Log into UltraCamp
- On Home Page, use the drop-down Menu located at the top left of the page
- From there, select Message Center
- Select "Email A Camper"

## Written Letter

Your family will receive a letter from one of our amazing staff members, typically delivered electronically by the second Wednesday of a General Session. These letters will also be available for pickup on a Closing Day.

Families can also choose to send letters via the postage system, but please keep in mind there are often delays in postage. We recommend you sending mail with ample time so it can be received within the session. Additionally, your camper can also bring stationery and stamps to write letters, which can also be sent out during their session—adding a personal touch to their camp experience.

## First time Families

Our first time campers families will receive a personal phone call from a member of our Camper Experience team. You can expect this call by the end of the first Wednesday of the session. This call provides an update on how your camper is settling in and is a great opportunity to ask any questions or share any concerns.

## Birthday at Camp

Many campers celebrate their birthdays while at Camp Thunderbird, and we make every effort to ensure they feel recognized and celebrated on their special day. Campers are typically honored with a special treat, such as an ice cream cake and a camp-wide rendition of "Happy Birthday" to make the moment memorable.

If you would like to plan something beyond our traditional celebration, please reach out to our Program Supervisor of Camper Experience to coordinate additional arrangements:

Hunter Goodhart  
Program Supervisor of Camp Experience  
(E)hunter.goodhart@ymcacharlotte.org (P)

## Care Packages

To keep everyone's experience smooth and safe, we ask that all care packages come from our camp store online. Unfortunately, we cannot accept outside care packages. Any outside packages that arrive will be opened to ensure there isn't anything of immediate need for the camper, and kept safely at the office for pick-up on closing day.

In the instance where essential items were forgotten at the time of drop-off, please e-mail the Program Supervisor of Camper Experience, to coordinate shipping the items. Camp will typically keep certain essentials on hand that we can give campers at no extra cost. Additionally, campers may ship their luggage under special circumstances.

## Photos

Camp Thunderbird uses Waldo Photos to share capture moments with families. Camper photos are uploaded into a dedicated gallery for the summer. You will receive a specific code upon arrival, that will grant you access. Additionally, Waldo Photos offer facial recognition software that you can subscribe to, and make your photo viewing experience more intuitive.

For the privacy and safety of our campers, they are never identified by name in any photos. While we strive to capture as many campers as possible each day, please note that we cannot guarantee that every camper will appear in our daily uploads.

## Social Media

For even more real-time updates and photos of camp life, be sure to follow us on our social media platforms! Stay connected and catch a glimpse of the fun happening each day at camp.

- Instagram: @ycampthunderbird
- Facebook: YMCA Camp Thunderbird

# Life at Camp

## Typical Daily Schedule for Campers

7:30 AM – Rise & Shine – Reveille

7:45 AM – Cabin Chores

8:15 AM – Flagpole – Blessing

8:30 AM – Breakfast

9:15 AM – Morning Water and Land activities

12:15 PM – Return to cabins, prepare for Lunch

12:45 PM – Lunch

1:30 PM – Rest period

2:45 PM – Afternoon Water and Land activities

5:45 PM Return to cabins, prepare for Dinner

6:10 PM Flag Lowering – Blessing

6:15 PM Dinner

7:15 PM Evening program

8:15 PM Evening Snack

9:30 PM Devotion – Taps

10:00 PM Lights out

## Cabin Assignment and Bunk Information

Cabin assignments at Camp Thunderbird are based on age—not grade—to ensure a developmentally appropriate and positive experience for every camper. We also group campers by session length, keeping one-week, two-week, and four-week campers together.

While we do our best to accommodate cabinmate requests, placements are not guaranteed. Each request is thoughtfully considered; however, final decisions are made by Camp Leadership. All requests must be submitted through UltraCamp at least three weeks prior to Opening Day.

Campers are placed in cabins of 10–18, with 2–4 counselors assigned based on age group. Cabins are equipped with modern comforts, including bunk beds, air conditioning, full bathroom facilities with hot and cold water, electrical outlets, and individual cubbies. Bunks and cubbies are pre-assigned.

Our oldest campers (typically ages 13+) enjoy a more traditional camp experience in cabins featuring open-air screened windows, ceiling fans, and shared bath facilities. With cool lake breezes in the evenings, these cabins offer a classic and memorable camp atmosphere.

## Staff

We are committed to building a well-trained and enthusiastic staff team. Many of our counselors were once Camp Thunderbird campers themselves, having experienced the magic firsthand—making them uniquely equipped to create that same meaningful experience for today’s campers.

We also bring together staff from across the country and around the world, creating a diverse and dynamic community that allows us to connect with and support every camper.

All team members are CPR and First Aid Certified. Additionally, team members may achieve a myriad of certifications that adhere to their specific work at Camp Thunderbird. These certifications include:

- YUSA Lifeguard or American Red Cross Lifeguard
- Coast Guard Limited Mariners
- Certified Operator for Challenge Towers
- Trained Operator for Challenge Towers
- USA Archery Level 1 Certified

We pride ourselves in providing an exceptional experience to campers and it all begins with our exceptional staff team!

## Dining Hall

Mealtimes are an important part of the Camp Thunderbird experience. Meals are served family-style, with cabins sitting together, giving campers a chance to relax, connect, and enjoy fellowship during their busy days.

Campers may also take part in the set-up and cleanup duties before and after meals, continuing a long-standing tradition of responsibility, service to others, and self-care. Effort and teamwork are recognized and celebrated. We call them our Camp Cruisers!

We understand that every camper has different tastes, so each meal includes a delicious entrée along with a variety of options such as cold cereals, pasta bars, salad bars, soup, and fresh fruit. Camp Thunderbird is also committed to accommodating dietary needs, including vegetarian, gluten-free, dairy-free, and vegan options. Please be sure to include any dietary restrictions in your camper’s profile so we can best support their needs.

## Evening Programming

Evening programs are a highlight of the Camp Thunderbird experience and a time many campers look forward to each day. These moments are designed to bring campers together, create lasting memories, and strengthen relationships.

From talent shows and large group games to campfires and the signature Thunderbird Bash, campers have opportunities to showcase their talents and be recognized for their skills. Most importantly, these programs foster meaningful connections with fellow campers and counselors, helping build a strong sense of community and belonging.

## Activities At A Glance

### Water Activities

Camp Thunderbird is home to over two miles of shoreline and offers access to Lake Wylie, providing a wide range of water activities for our campers. Each camper participates in all the activities throughout their session, traveling with their cabinmates to learn and grow together.

Activities include:

- Paddle Sports (canoeing, kayaking, etc.)
- Wake Sports (Skiing, kneeboarding, tubing, etc.)
- Sailing
- Swimming & Aquatic Inflatables

### Land Activities

We offer over 30 land-based activities for campers to choose from. Each camper can select four activities to participate in during their session, which rotate on a two-day schedule. In addition, each camper has free periods, giving them the opportunity to try activities outside of their chosen schedule. There's truly something for everyone! Check out our descriptions [HERE](#)

### Add-Ons Available

Boost your camper's experience with one of our many add-on activities at Camp Thunderbird! These activities are designed for extra skill-building, fun and more! You can log back into your account and add any of the experiences below up until one week before your scheduled session.

- Advanced Wake Sports- Hit the waves with one-on-one instruction from a seasoned staff team member. Replaces 3 land activity periods (Exclusive for Signature Session participants)
- Horseback Riding- Replaces 2 land activity periods
- Private Horseback Lesson
- Advanced Pottery- Create more, explore techniques and make masterpieces! Replaces 2 land activity periods (Exclusive for Signature Session participants)
- Bus transportation to Atlanta - Hassle free travel to our families from the Atlanta Metropolitan Area
- Airport Pick up & Drop off - Convenient, stress-free arrival and departure

## Bandana Program

This award program is designed to challenge and encourage campers through skill progression, goal setting, and personal achievement. Campers have the opportunity to choose their own challenges, set their own pace, and push their limits across a variety of activities.

Each activity offers up to four cards to achieve: Red, Blue, Silver, and Gold, which are outlined in a Card Book that every camper receives. This guide details the specific skills and requirements needed to advance at each activity.

### Point System:

- Red Card: 1 point
- Blue Card: 2 points
- Silver Card: 3 points
- Gold Card: 4 points

As campers accumulate points over time, they work toward earning Bandanas—recognitions of their dedication and growth. Progress is tracked year over year, allowing campers to build on their achievements each summer.

### Bandana Levels:

- Red Bandana: 18 points
- Blue Bandana: 48 points
- Silver Bandana: 95 points
- Gold Bandana: 150 points
- Double Gold Bandana: 270 points

This program encourages campers to set goals, stay motivated, and take pride in their accomplishments throughout their camp journey.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## How do I know my child is ready?

There are many ways to determine if your child is ready for Overnight Camp. Here are a few common indicators to consider:

- **Independence:** Your child is beginning to make choices on their own, such as selecting activities, deciding what to wear, or managing daily routines.
- **Socialization:** Your child feels comfortable engaging with others and thrives in social environments without needing much prompting.
- **Want to know more on the benefits of Camp?**
  - [American Camping Association: The Impact of Camp](#)
  - [Parent Webinar Series: Is My Child Ready for Overnight Camp?](#)

## What is the Staff: Camper Ratio in Cabins?

Our average ratio is 1:4 in our cabins for ages 7-12, and 1:6 ratio for Ages 13-16.

## What if my child gets homesick?

Homesickness is common, especially for first-time campers, and our staff are well-trained to support campers through it with compassion and encouragement. In most cases, it resolves within just a few days by using proven strategies and support. If it begins to impact your child's overall experience, we will be sure to keep you informed.

## What if my child is not a great swimmer?

Before anyone enters the water, they will take a swim test and get a colored swim band based on the performance of the test. A GREEN band is for strong swimmers, who can swim freely in shallow or deep water in the pool. A YELLOW band is for caution swimmers, who can swim freely but discouraged from the deep end. A RED band is for non-swimmers, who must wear a lifejacket in water at all times. Every child will wear a life Jacket if they are in the lake, regardless of their swimming ability.

## Is there a Lost & Found?

Things do get lost at camp and we do everything we can to get it returned. We will display all lost items for that session at the Duke Pavilion on Closing Days and hold items for two weeks. Once two weeks have passed, we will donate all items.