

Mound House Summer Camps Return!

Weekly From June 14 Through July 30

By Gary Mooney

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Summer Camps hosted by the historic Mound House on Fort Myers Beach, in conjunction with “Super Science & Amazing Art,” return in 2021, with seven weekly camps alternating through four themes for kids ages 6 to 10 from June 14 through July 30.

Camps are \$250-per-camper-per-week, with scholarship opportunities to offset costs. The Monday through Friday camps, with three days at the Mound House and two at Newton Beach Park, are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Mound House days feature kayaking to learn safety rules, etiquette and proper paddling techniques, with outdoor games and exploring the museum and underground exhibit. At Newton Beach Park, campers swim, discover the beach environment, and research animals and plants through the Camp’s Marine Science Computer Laboratory. Mound House Summer Camps will have a weekly enrollment of 6 to 15 children, with COVID-19 precautions like mask-wearing and social distancing.

“The Mound House is the perfect place for Summer Camps,” raved Glen Beitmen, “Super Science & Amazing Art Camps” founder. “It is close to the beach, with kayaks and a beautiful large yard for play, so that is pretty cool!” Glen, or “The Super Scientist” or “Mr. Glen” as kids call him, hopes campers learn that “simplicity itself is a key approach, as the Calusa Indians demonstrated when they first settled Fort Myers Beach 2,000 years ago. They were strong, intelligent, and creative; in their own way the scientists of their age, by utilizing what was around them. We want our kids to discover that inventiveness in themselves, by using what is all around them.”

Weekly Camp Themes

Mound House camps rotate four themes. “Gamers” focuses on video game design, where campers play-test popular game titles and design and create their own! On Fridays, they livestream their own Gamer Convention to display their skills to the outside world.

“Gamers” weeks are June 14 through 18 and July 12 to 16.

“Build It” turns campers into engineers who make new technologies by improving upon old things! Construct towers, windmills, boats, balloon cars, airplanes, and more. Fridays livestream the Team Challenge to show off their creations. “Build It” runs from June 21 through 25, then July 19 to 23.

“Kitch Chem” allows campers to experiment with slime, color-changing concoctions, and mad science mixtures! They utilize everyday items found in kitchens or around the house and transform them into extraordinary things. Kids on Fridays livestream their chemistry show to share new tips and skills with others. “Kitch Chem” is June 28 through July 2 and July 26 to 30.

“Robotics” teaches kids to build and control underwater robots! The junior scientists learn how electricity intertwines with everything around us, while taking apart items like drones and battery-powered toys. Friday is a Robo Expo livestream to show off what you made to family and friends. “Robotics” is July 6 to 10, with no Camp on Monday, July 5, due to the official Independence Day Holiday.

“The Super Scientist” explains why he concludes each camp with an interactive program. “Kids being kids, when they go home each evening, parents usually ask ‘what did you do all day,’ and they reply, ‘Nothing!’ By ending each session with interactive presentations, parents, grandparents and siblings are part of the experience, with campers becoming the instructors. This usually becomes the campers favorite part, as what we do all week is living science! On top of that, public speaking is a crucial life skill, and college advisors and potential employers tell me my former campers’ presentation backgrounds often separated them from the pack.”

Mr. Glen is confident the Mound House Summer Camps are safe to return in 2021. “This year we have the vaccine and a better understanding of COVID-19,” he emphasized. “We will take the safety precautions of social distancing, mask wearing, and following all CDC guidelines. With all these in place, we can address our campers need to run, play and be with friends. Isolation and separation from a social network and lack of routine has long-term effects on children, so by giving them an outlet to get outside, play, and have fun with other kids is just as important as living safely. We will do both and are ready for a safe and exciting summer!”

Truly Unique Venues

Mound House Executive Director Alison Geisen believes the Mound House is ideal for Summer Camps “because we offer truly unique venues, like the Back Bay and Gulf of Mexico, to host different programs and experiences, along with the historical component from our museum complex in small group settings. This vast variety of historical, natural and environmental settings make Mound House Camps a Win-Win!”

“At the Newton Beach Park cottage we set up a science lab with research computers, cameras, and microscopes,” stated Mr. Glen, “so campers become budding Marine Biologists. The Mound House is one of the Florida’s most beautiful locations, with large open grass areas for games and activities, and the museum is truly unlike any other in the entire world! We kayak and explore the underground exhibit to look right inside the Calusa mound. What I find most exciting about these camps is many discourage water activities, while ours encourages them! Mound House Camps are a unique combination of history, innovative activities, and unbelievable spaces for campers to learn and play.”

If kids need Summer Camp financial assistance, the Mound House and “Super Science” each offer scholarships. “Mound House scholarships come primarily from the FMB Community Foundation and the Friends of the Mound House,” Alison related. “Without their ongoing support, the Mound House could never offer all we do! Just go on the SuperScienceFL.com registration link and apply.” While most of Mound House campers come from the FMB community, “we had several from throughout Southwest Florida,”

added Mr. Glen, “as well as from Tennessee and one from Germany! Their family come here for the beach but learned about us and joined, so it is a nice mix.”

The Mound House is Estero Island’s oldest standing structure. The Town of Fort Myers Beach operates it as a museum and cultural and environmental learning center. The Mound House, at 451 Connecticut Street with overflow parking at 216 Connecticut, is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, & Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$10 for ages 13 & up, \$8 for students with IDs, \$5 ages 6 to 12, and 5 & under free, with Town residents receiving a 50% discount. For information or a monthly programs schedule, call 239-765-0865 or see www.moundhouse.org.

The Mound House may be able to accommodate early drop-off and/or late camper pickup based on instructor availability. Campers must bring their lunches, two snacks, and water bottle each day, along with sunscreen, hat, sunglasses, towel, and clothing change. Register now at <https://supersciencefl.com/the-mound-house-2>.

“Mound House campers think their way through the process in everything we do,” concluded Mr. Glen. “They examine things, whether found at the beach or Mound House, by putting it under the microscope to learn about it. Each child every day studies what interests them individually, all while enjoying fun, sun, and water. Join us so your kids achieve these discoveries for themselves!”