

## PhillyKinder Summer Camp, August 5-16, 2024

Due to the church fire in Overbrook in January, we needed to find a new location for the PhillyKinder summer camp, previously held at Overbrook Presbyterian Church. Luckily, Anja had a contact in Swarthmore who helped us secure the Swarthmore Friends' Meetinghouse as a location. It is nestled amidst the Scott Arboretum at Swarthmore College and just steps away from Crum Woods and Crum Creek. With such beautiful surroundings, it was a natural choice to focus on nature themes for our two-week camp.

We welcomed Kindergarten through 7th grade students, divided into two groups each week: one for younger elementary and one for older elementary and middle school students. Each day started with a morning circle, followed by group activities and a group game. Whenever possible, we had lunch outside, followed by indoor card and board games, as well as quiet reading time. The days were closed off with water games and crafts on the playground in the afternoon.

During the first week, the older group took water samples from the creek and explored creek life and insects in general. Both groups used a high-resolution microscope under the guidance of Dr. Troy Messick, a scientist and PhillyKinder parent, to explore the creek water life. Microscopic findings were compared with those of beetles, blood, and onions. The younger group collected nature materials to create beautiful collages. The older group explored herbariums and then built and decorated individual flower presses. Both groups had the chance to explore the creek before it swelled with heavy rain water and enjoyed exploratory walks through the arboretum and the forest. A final highlight of the first week was the older group preparing a delicious, healthy vegetarian lunch and making smoothies for everyone on Friday.

During the second week, the elementary group built and decorated volcanoes out of paper mâché. Their constructions were rounded off by crafting dinosaur eggs to hide in their volcanoes, and dinosaurs. They all greatly enjoyed



making their volcanoes erupt on Thursday! The older group studied how the forest floor filters water, followed by exploring and building different water filtration systems. A highlight of their week was constructing mini rafts from twigs and string, which were raced down a portion of the creek. On Thursday the older campers prepared various dishes with high-water-content vegetables for everybody to taste, including a couscous salad, tzatziki, and mini-Caprese-skewers. The homemade watermelon-lime popsicles were the favorite dish prepared that day. On the last day, both groups joined together for a treasure hunt organized by Susanna. In mixed-age groups they explored the Scott Arboretum to find and solve clues that led to a hidden treasure box. The camp ended with the ultimate highlight of the week - the epic water balloon toss showdown.

This year was especially memorable for the chance to be immersed in nature, and everyone loved spending so much time outdoors. Despite facing some weather challenges in the first week, the second week brought near perfect temperatures. Overall, the beautiful location and its surroundings were a big hit with the PhillyKinder campers and their team.

- Birgit Splitt, for the PhillyKinder Summer Camp Team 2024  
(Manuela, Susanna, Ines, Birgit, Annika, Samuel & Anja)

