



*Dedicated to advancing the quality of programs for children and youth by developing, linking and supporting school age child care providers.*

Volume 1, Issue 2, Summer 2007

Dear VSACCA Members,

As I enter into the last few months as President of VSACCA I am happy to report that our organization is flourishing and is poised to grow even more. Karen Washington as president elect has laid impressive groundwork to position VSACCA at the center of child care issues. The board has grown to include a diverse cross section of child care professionals and our members are getting new and innovated tools to use in their education.

It has been both an honor and a pleasure to have played a part in this growth. Every organization is only as strong as the people it has in it and ours is a dedicated group. We have reconnected with the National Afterschool Association and that has led to our connection with Vicki Carr as this year's conference planner. This partnership has already resulted in VERTEX sending messages to our member free of charge. From what I've seen at the NAA National Conference in Phoenix this year, which Vicki organized, I cannot wait to see what she has planned for our State Conference in Newport News in October. I challenge all our members to go out and invite others you work with to come to this year's conference because it will be the best yet!

The course we set for ourselves last year was full of learning experiences and growth that we must now use to build upon. I am confident that the leadership is in place and the organization is in good hands. Together we can make a difference in the lives of children and those who work on behalf of children.

In closing I'd like to express my sincere appreciation to all the Board members who through their tireless efforts have made being the President of VSACCA an enjoyable and extremely proud experience.

Sincerely,

Roy J. Hughes  
VSACCA President



# Tapping in to the Magical Rhythms of Summer

## By Roberta Newman

### ***Summer's Special Magic***

The poet asks “*What is so rare as a day in June?*” Songwriters have celebrated summer’s magic with lyrics like “*Summertime, when the livin’ is easy.....*” “*Lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer.....*” and even the line “*Hot time, summer in the city!*” from a 1970’s song complete with the nerve racking, but exciting, sounds of jack hammers making street repairs downtown somewhere in the USA. All these songs communicate that summer is a special time, a time that evokes a unique combination of meanings – a time to explore, to dream, to kick back, to relax, to play, to enjoy life with friends, to have special kinds of excitement that seem like magic.

### ***Kids Know That Summer Is Special***

Kids know instinctively that summer is special. When I was a kid, I looked forward to summer as a time full of promise and possibilities. Time itself seemed longer; more day light meant there was more time to enjoy, more time to use. As summer stretched out before me, I thought about how much I could explore. I imagined myself being someone much better, prettier, or smarter when the summer ended. I thought of summer as a big warm cocoon which would allow me to grow – to change myself into a grand butterfly by the time I returned to school in the fall.

I treasured summer and busied myself with many self-directed projects, each of which occupied my interest for hours a day, and sometimes day after day for many weeks. No one told me I was creating “long term projects” at the time, but developmentally that is exactly what I was doing and what I needed. Between the ages of 5 and 12, these were some of my favorite summer activities (think about your own summer experiences as you read about mine):

- I spent hours designing outfits for paper dolls with several friends. Our favorite design location was the screen porch of one of our homes. I remember noticing how wonderful it was to feel the warm summer breeze blowing through the porch as we worked.
  
- I spent weeks pretending to be an Interior Decorator. My friend Sandra and I collected cardboard boxes from the grocery store, scraps of fancy ribbons from a florist, remnants of fabric from our mom’s sewing boxes, scraps of wood from my dad’s workshop, and wallpaper from discarded books we found in a dumpster. Each day Sandra and I decorated a new room. We started with a cardboard box and decided whether to decorate a kitchen, bedroom, living or dining room. Then we papered the sides of the box with wallpaper, used fabric remnants and

scraps of ribbon to make curtains, create rugs, and upholster scraps of wood that became beds, couches, and easy chairs. When we finished a room, we took a break and looked in old copies of decorating magazines to get ideas for the next project. We didn't tire of this activity for at least a month, when we had sixteen lavishly decorated rooms to our credit!

- When Sandra and I got tired of being Interior Decorators, we spent many afternoons building forts in a vacant lot in our neighborhood. We dragged old blankets and lots of cardboard boxes to the site and let our imaginations run wild as we built our own dramatic play corner.
- When I wanted to be alone, I headed for the local library which opened a world of adventure to me. I remember checking out nearly two dozen books on one occasion (our old library didn't have a limit). The books seemed "delicious" to me and I devoured them as I learned about people I wanted to be like someday – a librarian or a frontier woman standing alone in the great western desert, surveying her land.
- Inspired by books, I spent many hours nestled in a perfect seat between two branches of my "lookout" tree, writing poems and plays which I coerced my friends to read and perform on a makeshift backyard stage for other kids who paid a nickel for the performance.
- On rainy days, I spent time playacting with old clothes in our attic. As the rain poured down, my imagination transformed my father's old coats into the tattered clothes I thought a starving artist or composer would wear. I loved to mess up my permed hair until it looked as wild as Beethoven's in my piano music book. Then I would pretend to be this tragic figure – the deaf genius who wrote beautiful music and seemed so romantic to me at the young age of seven.
- In the late afternoons and early evenings, I regularly joined a large group of neighborhood kids to play ball games and street games, ride bikes, and roller skate until we were exhausted.
- But I was practical, too. I loved the idea of earning money in the summer and labored mowing lawns and picking dandelions as a 12 year old. I'll never forget the brown corduroy pedal pushers (now we'd call them Capri pants) I



bought with this money – a great prop to support my transformation into a fall beauty. Nor will I forget the album of 45's I bought that summer by the deaf popular singer, Johnny Ray, and how I played his records over and over on endless summer afternoons while he sang *"The Little White Cloud That Cried," "Cry,"* and *"Walkin' My Baby Back Home"* – songs that become my rehearsal for soon to be romances and heartaches.

These were just a few of my self-directed summer memories and whenever I bring them to mind I can almost taste and smell the wonderful free flowing pace of life in the summertime – a pace of life that was such a gift. Certainly, a pace of life that would benefit kids today, if we can only find a way to provide it.

### ***Remembering Summer Activities Planned By Adults***

Some summer fun was planned by the adults in my life. Every summer between the ages of 8 and 11, I spent two weeks in the woods on a lake at Camp Tuenduwei. It was intended as a treat – a gift from my parents. In many ways, camp was like a SAC program, except you stayed overnight. There was lots to do – swimming, archery, tennis, crafts, boating, camp fires and cookouts, drama. We got a little taste of everything, but not really an opportunity to make choices to explore things that really interested us. We did a little bit of a lot of things, but we never did anything long enough to start a "relationship" with the activity. And I was ready for in-depth, long-term relationships with things I enjoyed!



Camp Tuenduwei was very structured. It was tightly organized and planned by the counselors who were fun people, but who were afraid of what might happen if we campers had too much freedom on our hands. Camp moved along at a fast clip; it didn't have a "summer rhythm." I remember several times waking up in my cabin to the sound of rain on the cabin roof. I was ecstatic when this happened. To me, it meant that the tightly organized plan for the day would be foiled. It meant I could go to the crafts barn all day, make up plays, or go to the camp library as long as I wanted! I wanted back the "summer rhythm" my friends and I had created with all of our special projects, social interactions, and free flowing imaginations.

### ***What "Summer Rhythm" Can Mean for SAC Programs***

When we as SAC staff look forward to our summer programs, we see LOTS of TIME stretched out before us. We have to pace ourselves accordingly. We can think of this time in two different ways:

1. We can think of it as a BIG PROBLEM. We can worry that we will never be able to fill the time. After all, a daily 10 or 11 hour stretch can be scary! It's easy to get caught up thinking: *"How will I keep things going smoothly for so many kids without losing control?"*

2. We can think of all this time as a BIG OPPORTUNITY – an opportunity to do all the things we didn't have time for in our two to three hour after school programs.

If we choose to see the stretch of summer hours as an opportunity, where do we begin? First we need to lay the groundwork with balanced programming. We do need daily balanced opportunities for children to participate in activities that grow out of their characteristic developmental needs and interests. When I refer to "summer rhythm," it doesn't mean that we shouldn't have any structure or a regular schedule. Of course, we need a plan. To make effective plans, it's important to keep in mind seven classic developmental needs of school-agers:

1. The need for *Physical Activity* and related rest, food, and appropriate risk-taking to strengthen new physical capabilities.
2. The need for *Self-Definition* through activities that provide time for reflection, exploration, and interaction with others.
3. The need for *Competence and Achievement* through activities that allow children to get good at things and be recognized for accomplishments.
4. The need for *Social Interaction* through activities that provide children with opportunities to learn and practice social skills in large and small groups.
5. The need for *Creative Expression* through activities that provide children with opportunities to express new thoughts and feelings through visual arts, writing, music and movement, etc.
6. The need for *Structure and Clear Limits* through activities which have clear guidelines and boundaries and provide children with opportunities to help shape guidelines, rules, boundaries, and consequences when guidelines are not followed.
7. The need for *Meaningful Participation* through activities that provide children with opportunities to participate in "real world" projects and contribute to their communities.

When developing a schedule to support these kinds of activities, it's important to design a format where it's possible to offer multiple simultaneous activities relating to various needs. This builds flexibility, choice, and "summer rhythm" into the foundation of the program's schedule. The goal is to create a program where many things are happening at the same time in an organized way so that children with different interests and rhythms can choose different ways to use their time.

## Co-Creating Summer Programs with Kids

Many programs go no further than creating simultaneous activity options. They offer a vast *smorgasbord* of varied activities and hope that will be enough to keep children engaged and involved in a positive way. The responsibility for keeping things going rests squarely on the shoulders of staff. However, by taking some additional steps, it's possible for staff to engage kids in co-creating an unfolding program with them. This means encouraging children to initiate activities on their own and/or to expand and extend activities they have experienced. In other words, staff encourage kids to go back to the *smorgasbord* for more of what they really like and to think up *dishes* they would like to *add* to the table to make it even more *appealing and delicious*! Here are some basic suggestions for building on your *smorgasbord* of activities by involving children in helping you create and sustain a summer rhythm in your program:

- Observe and converse with individual children to identify their interests. Ask lots of informal, open-ended questions to find out who they are becoming and what matters to them. If you don't ask you may never know:

*Nine year old Sara attended a school-age program for two years before anyone talked with her about her interests. When they did, they discovered Sara wants to be a fashion designer when she grows up. She has many sketch books with her own original designs at home, saves her allowance to buy fabric so she can try out her designs, and is taking sewing lessons from her aunt. Before someone noticed Sara seemed bored in the art area and asked her what kinds of things she would like to do in the art area, she kept her fashion designing to herself. Now, Sara is a co-creator of the program. She is the leader of the program's Fashion Club, is helping teach other kids how to draw and how to sew, and is working with other kids to put on a SAC Fashion Show!*

- Create places in your program that encourage kids to try out or pursue their own special interests.

*Set up Y.O.T. Centers or Clubs. Y.O.T. is pronounced "yacht" and stands for "Your Own Time." This is an area where kids can store and work on individual hobbies and projects – collections, scrap books, journals, sketch books, gimp and other craft projects, etc. One child's interest often sparks a similar interest in others and they then become co-creators of special projects together.*

- Create Independent Activity Centers inviting children to get acquainted with new interests or ongoing projects. Provide materials and resources for children to have "fun for one or two."

*Independent Activity Centers in one program revolved around "How to be a Politician," "How to Manage Money," "How to Write a Play," "How to Be a Songwriter," "How to Understand and Follow Sports Statistics in Baseball and Basketball," "How to Do Yo-Yo Tricks," "How to Do Magic Tricks." Kids became co-creators of the program as they taught and shared their new skills and knowledge with others.*

- Post a question of the day – an open-ended question to generate kids ideas or a mystery question or riddle to stimulate imagination and encourage kids to be resourceful.

*One program worked with kids to create a colorful, life-sized cardboard "Question Man." The "Question Man" was placed at the entry to the program. Each week he wore a new sign around his neck that posed a new question for kids to think about- questions like: What skill do you wish you could learn in the program? Who would you like to invite to visit the program? Kids became co-creators of program activities as they wrote down their answers and suggestions and put them in the "Question Man's" special pocket! Soon, they added a "Question Lady," as well!*

- Provide open-ended materials and special environments to encourage certain kinds of activities.

*Kids in one program helped co-create the program environment as they worked together to set up a special Reading Pond by stocking a large plastic swimming pool with pillows, magazines, and selected books. In another program, kids helped co-create a special nature clubhouse by fitting together pieces of PVC tubing to create a rectangular structure and draping see-through plastic shower curtains over the horizontal tubes to create walls. They used magic markers to decorate the shower curtain walls with drawings of their favorite creatures from the natural world.*

- Use a *Project Approach* to engage kids in long-term, ongoing activities and clubs. School-age kids love projects – activities that have goals, a beginning, a middle, and an end at some point! There’s nothing more exhausting than having to come up with a series of short-term activities to keep kids occupied and entertained. Short-term activities can be fun and are perfect for some kids – but they often lead nowhere. The next day, you either repeat them or start over again with a whole new set. To give your program a “summer rhythm,” work with kids to launch and co-create ongoing projects around interests or issues that matter to them:

*Projects to help save and maintain the environment.  
Projects to raise money for a worthy cause  
Projects to help the homeless or a family in need  
Projects to learn healthy habits and live a balanced lifestyle  
Projects to put on shows and entertain others*

All of these strategies will help you offer kids a program that “taps in to the magical rhythms of summer” and co-create a world of summer magic with the children and youth in your program. Use them and you’ll have a wonderful, lazy, hazy, crazy summer that’s lots of fun for everyone!



## Virginia School-Age Child Care Association



## CONFERENCE & EXPO

October 26 - 27, 2007 · Friday and Saturday

PreConference · October 25, 2007

Newport News Marriott at City Center

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**[www.virginiaafterschool.org](http://www.virginiaafterschool.org)**



## *Child Care Day at the State Fair of Virginia October 3, 2007*

The State Fair of Virginia and The Virginia Child Care Resource & Referral Network has worked together to identify October 3, 2007 as Child Care Day at the State Fair. A special rate of \$5 per child (does not include rides) with an approved number of chaperones receiving free admission will be offered to pre-registered groups (prepayment is NOT REQUIRED to register). Each pre-registered group will receive an information packet with a teacher's guide to help you plan for your visit. Your visit will include special educational programs for young children including Young MacDonald's Farm, Birg Red Barn and Rabbit Tent and more!!

Register at [http://www.statefair.com/school\\_tours\\_registration.asp](http://www.statefair.com/school_tours_registration.asp) or call Tour Coordinator:  
(804) 569-3220 for assistance.





# Virginia School-Age Child Care Association

## 2007 DISCOVER Conference and Expo

October 26 and 27 • Marriott Newport News at City Center

### Will you be submitting a proposal?

Don't register yet! One presenter from each workshop may attend the conference as a guest. All others who submit proposals will be entitled to the early payment rate.

### Visit [www.VirginiaAfterSchool.org](http://www.VirginiaAfterSchool.org)

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Complete form below and fax or mail. Please include attendee's direct email. Important conference information will be sent to this address.

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Conference Fees	Full Conference Friday/Saturday	Single Day <i>Circle one</i> Friday or Saturday
<b>Payment received by 7/31/07*</b> <i>Payment must be faxed or postmarked by 7/31/07.</i>	\$150	\$105
<b>Payment received after 8/1/07*</b> <i>Payment must be faxed or postmarked by 10/1/07 or brought onsite.</i>	\$170	\$120
<b>Onsite Registration</b>	\$180	\$130

\*Payment is based on funds received (check or credit card) at Conference Office. An issued Purchase Order is not payment.

### Tell Us More

- Please contact me regarding any special requirements.
- Please do not send me conference related materials from VSACCA, AfterSchool Conference Inc., or authorized vendors.
- I am interested in coming by chartered bus or train from Northern Virginia or the Blue Ridge area.

### Payment Information

- Credit Card (Visa, Mastercard, AMEX, Discover)
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### Important Dates

**September 31, 2007** - Cancellations received in writing/by email at Conference Office prior to 9/31/07 will be refunded by check, less a 20% administrative fee. No refunds will be made for cancellations after 9/31/07. Substitutions may be made at any time. Refunds will be issued by 11/15/07.

**October 1, 2007** - Do not send any payment through the mail after October 1, 2007. Bring payment to the Conference and pay onsite.

**October 9, 2007** - Online and fax-in registration close. Onsite payment will be required for registrations received through October 9. Note: Those attendees NOT pre-registered by October 9 will incur a late registration fee of \$10.