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Camps & Schools Spring 2026



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Learning to Sail Builds Life Skills

BY AMY ZANG
SAILING SCHOOL DIRECTOR/OWNER

There's a moment early in every young sailor's experience when something clicks. The wind fills the sail, the boat responds, and suddenly they're not just passengers — they're in control. It's a small moment, but it tends to stay with them.

That shift — from observer to operator, from uncertain to capable — is at the core of what youth sailing programs offer. On the surface, kids are learning to tack, trim sails, and read the wind. Underneath, they're building something that lasts well past the dock.

Sailing is fundamentally a team sport, even in a single-handed boat. Young sailors learn early that success depends on communication, trust, and shared responsibility. Whether they're rigging before launch or working through a problem on the water, everyone plays a role — and everyone knows

it. That sense of accountability to something larger than yourself is a difficult thing to teach in a classroom. On the water, it happens naturally.

Leadership develops the same way. Sailors rotate between skipper and crew, giving each person the chance to direct and to follow. They learn to make decisions quickly, communicate clearly, and stay calm when conditions change — skills that translate directly into school, athletics, and eventually the workplace. The confidence that comes from navigating a boat through shifting winds is the same confidence that raises a hand in class or steps up in a group project.

The mechanical side of sailing matters too, and it tends to surprise people. Young sailors develop a genuine understanding of how rigging systems work, how sail shape affects performance, and how to troubleshoot problems in real time. This isn't abstract — it's hands-on physics, engineering, and critical

thinking happening simultaneously. Sailing is STEM before students ever think of it that way.

Adversity is built into the sport. The wind doesn't cooperate, capsize happens, races don't go as planned. What young sailors learn is that these moments aren't failures — they're feedback. Patience, perseverance, and the ability to reset and try again are practiced constantly, in an environment

where the consequences are real but manageable. Those lessons tend to stick.

Water safety is woven throughout. Sailors develop deep respect for the water alongside the skills to navigate it responsibly — from proper life jacket use to reading weather conditions and knowing emergency procedures. Awareness and confidence in and around the water become second nature.


What youth sailing ultimately offers is a sense of possibility. As

skills grow, so does a willingness to push past perceived limits, take on harder challenges, and approach uncertainty with curiosity rather than anxiety. The water has a way of expanding what young people believe they're capable of.

That's the point. Sailing is a sport, yes — but for the young people who learn it, it tends to become something more: a foundation for how they approach difficulty, responsibility, and growth for the rest of their lives.



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DMV Area Camps & Schools Offer Diverse Experience

BY FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS

Summer offers children a chance to explore new interests, build confidence and create lasting memories — and families in the Falls Church area have no shortage of strong camp options to choose from.

For younger children, Grasshopper Green School provides a warm, nurturing introduction to summer camp. Its program emphasizes hands-on learning, outdoor play and creative exploration, all in a supportive early childhood setting. Campers are encouraged to follow their curiosity while building social skills and independence in a gentle, engaging environment.

A similarly well-rounded approach can be found at Kenwood School, where summer programming blends academics, enrichment and recreation. Campers move through a thoughtfully structured day that keeps them both mentally engaged and physically active, balancing learning with creativity

and play. It's an appealing option for families looking to maintain educational momentum while still embracing the spirit of summer.

For students eager to sharpen their voices and ideas, Capitol Debate offers a more specialized experience. Its programs focus on public speaking, critical thinking and persuasive argument, helping campers develop confidence while engaging with current events and collaborative challenges. The result is a dynamic environment where intellectual curiosity and communication skills take center stage.

Closer to home, the City of Falls Church Recreation and Parks delivers a wide array of traditional and specialty camps that serve a broad range of interests and age groups. From sports and games to arts and outdoor activities, these community-based programs emphasize accessibility, variety and fun, making them a reliable choice for many local families.

For children who thrive

on movement, KiPS Family Gymnastics provides an energetic outlet centered on gymnastics and active play. Campers spend their days tumbling, climbing and participating in group games that build strength, coordination and confidence — all within a lively, supportive atmosphere designed to keep kids engaged and moving.

Rounding out the options is

Washington Sailing Marina Camp, which offers a distinctly different summer experience along the Potomac River. Here, campers are introduced to sailing and boating safety while spending their days on the water. The program fosters independence, teamwork and a sense of adventure, making it especially appealing for those ready to try something new in an outdoor

setting.

Taken together, these camps highlight the breadth of opportunities available in the area. Whether children are just beginning their camp journey, looking to stay active, eager to learn new skills or ready for a unique outdoor adventure, there is a program suited to nearly every interest.



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