SUMMER PROGRAM FAQs

What do you do at your Summer program?

We are artists, naturalists, and educators that create outdoor nature art discovery programs for youth that also incorporate local environmental knowledge. Each Summer day's activities and outings are different. We may go into the woods to visit the small stream, or hike up the Hook Mountain trail, or walk down to the Hudson River beach for fishing with a seine net and waders. Wherever we go we bring art materials with us and set up an outdoor studio space for both creating art and nature exploration. We play games, harvest natural materials, learn about wild edibles, grind rocks into pigments, build shelters... The possibilities are endless! Then we come back for swimming in the afternoon each day. We may also have guest artists and musicians join us for special visits.

Where are you located?

Strawtown Studio is on the grounds of the Marydell Center. Marydell is a retreat center located at the base of Hook Mountain in Upper Nyack, NY. For many decades it was a summer camp for girls from NYC. Today the center hosts programs and rents its facilities to numerous groups. There are 2 other small summer programs that run on the grounds, as well, during the summer.

Why is your Summer program 4 days a week and not 5?

We believe that the Summer should be a relaxing time of year that offers children different types of experiences, in addition to our summer program, and so we allow for the 5th day off each week. The Strawtown Summer weeks are full days of energy-intensive adventuring, creating, and relating, and the 5th day is often a necessary rest day for the children. We have found the four-day program is currently our best and most successful model.

Can my 5 or 6-year-old attend the Summer Program?

We occasionally accept 5 or 6-year-olds during Summer. Our Summer program is high energy, where we go on hikes and outings with the children, and spend part of the days at different sites. Sometimes the younger ones don’t have the stamina, or
the developmental skills to keep track of their belongings and take verbal cues from afar (i.e., crossing the street as a group.) It also depends on the mixed age group of the children registered (age 7 – 12). If you think your child is ready for this, give us a call! (845) 512-8279

**Do you provide food?**

Children bring their own lunch and water. We provide water refills and a healthy (mostly non-gmo or organic) afternoon snack. Please be sure to inform us if your child has any food allergies or food restrictions, and we will do our utmost best to accommodate them.

**How many children are in your group?**

Our Summer program takes 9 children each week. The small group allows for our staff to follow the creative impulses of each of the children. We specialize in guiding the questions and curiosities of each child to help them make discoveries that are relevant to their own world and interests. This is best achieved in a small setting where the children have many opportunities to share their thoughts, develop their ideas, and our educators can work closely with them one on one.

**What is your staff/child ratio?**

Our Summer staff/child ratio is 1:2 or 1:3. Strawtown’s teaching model offers a very personalized experience, where we aim for every child to be seen and heard, and have the opportunity to work out their ideas. In order to teach hands-on skills, one-on-one time is necessary, and having a higher staff/child ratio allows for this. We see the Strawtown experience as a whole creative learning community, and the educators are there as learners also!

**What kind of art do you offer?**

The art at Strawtown takes many forms: fine art, earth art, and craft. Above all, we work with art to learn about and connect with our places. Our specialty is combining quality fine art and craft materials with natural materials (and our questions!) to make new and inspiring discoveries. The art process is often experimental and exploratory. Sometimes the art is only made of nature, and left in the woods for the creatures and elements. Yet we also create works that can be taken home and last for years to come.
Some traditional art methods we offer include: painting, drawing, sculpture, clay, wire-work, ink-painting, watercolor, wood-burning, book-making, natural pigments and dyes, herbal crafts, paper-making, and more!

**What kind of science do you offer?**

We integrate science that explains the workings and interrelationships of the world. The natural sciences we offer begin with inquiry from our direct observations, and leads to experimenting with materials and processes. This includes learning in all seasons what’s happening with our local plants, soils, geology, watershed, and wildlife, as well as studying ecology and living systems.

With our engagement in the Hudson River environmental community, local watershed groups, and citizen science projects, our educators bring state-of-the-art science concepts to students. We care about the environment and living sustainably. And so our programs are helping to raise children with a life-long connection with nature and a sense of environmental stewardship.

**What kind of nature do you offer?**

We follow a place-based education model, which means most everything we do is based upon the natural, historical and cultural surroundings of our places. Our studio is located on the peaceful grounds of Marydell, at the base of Hook Mountain, with splendid views of the Hudson River. There are woodlands, meadows, mountain-top, and river beach to explore, all within a short walking distance. We also have large trees, open fields, marvelous plant diversity, and wetland habitats!

**Do you offer swimming lessons?**

We swim for 1 hour each afternoon in our Summer program. We do not offer formal swimming lessons, however, our lifeguard is available for instructing students who want to improve their skills during free swim time.

**Do you offer sports or exercise?**

We do not offer organized sports, but the free time and the games we play often involve running, agility, balance, and teamwork. We go on outings every day, so there is almost always a walk or hike. There is a lot of opportunity for movement!
Do you have early drop off/late pickup?

Our Summer program hours are 9:30am – 4:00pm. We offer an 8:30am early drop-off option per week. We do not offer late pickup at this time.

Do you offer scholarships?

Yes, Strawtown Studio is 501c3 not-for-profit, and we occasionally receive funds for scholarships. Please contact us for the application form.

If you would like to help bring another child to Strawtown’s programs, please make a donation [here]. Thank you!

If you have any further questions, please don’t hesitate to call or write!

(845) 512-8279 info@strawtownstudio.org