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## Summertime Teens

By *Sophie Braccini*



Katie (Recreation Leader) and Jenna (Jr. Recreation Leader) with summer campers in 2007 Photo courtesy Lafayette Parks and Rec

Teenagers getting up past noon every day and spending way too much time in front of a screen is not what most parents want to see all summer long. In our affluent communities it is not rare to see young adolescent spending weeks in Paris or Beijing or signing up for out-of-state enrichment programs such as a two week ballet class in New York or forensic science in Washington D.C. Others who have more modest budgets won't have as many options this summer with community colleges and school districts reducing their offerings. But there will still be interesting options for our youth, from internships, to jobs, and traditional or more unusual camps.

The very first options that are close to home are the Parks and Recreation departments which offer both summer classes up to age 16 or 18 and Counselor in Training (CIT) programs that can become real summer jobs as teens gain experience.

"We hire adolescents who will be freshmen in high school in the fall," explains Linda Dezzani, Recreation Manager in Orinda. "The first year they are CITs and get just a stipend, and as they gain experience they can be hired in subsequent years as group leaders and instructors."

In Lafayette, the CITs register like any other campers and pay 1/2 tuition. They work alongside the counselors during the "Camp Awesome" sessions offered

by Lafayette. "Some of our CITs come back the following years as real counselors," says Jonathan "ACE" Katayanagi, Recreation Program Coordinator in Lafayette, "for them it is a real learning experience and they have fun."

Both cities offer traditional summer camps for teens. Soccer, tennis, basketball, creative writing, video, rock and roll, theater, 3D animation, chess and more.

In Moraga, Parks and Rec Director Jay Ingram hires student 15 years and older as junior counselors, "We don't have a junior counselor program. As much as I would like to do a program of this nature, I don't think we will have the time to do it. If we end up with a real strong staff that might be a different story."

The other big classics of the summer are creative arts and sports. Very locally, for example, Sewnow Fashion Design offers a variety of one week camps for teens in fashion design and sewing. In the creative arts area, St Mary's College offers camps such as the Figure Drawing for Teens workshop for age 13 to 18.

But nothing should stop you from exploring more unusual options, such as sending your teen to learn Blacksmithing or Glass-Tube Sculpture at the Crucible ([thecrucible.org](http://thecrucible.org)) in Oakland.

Many teens choose to spend a great part of their summer practicing their sport of choice. Most private clubs provide summer opportunities to sharpen skills.

St Mary's is a popular place for teens, with resident and non-resident camps. "Going to an Athletic Summer Camp such as Saint Mary's College not only provides teens physical skills and health benefits, but is an opportunity for healthy social interaction, as a self esteem builder, stress reliever, as well as teaching responsibility, leadership, and cooperation," says Adam Kennedy, Director of Summer Athletic Camps at Saint Mary's.

If students are academically inclined, the local junior college, Diablo Valley College (DVC) in Pleasant Hill offers a wide variety of classes. Unfortunately, due to budget restrictions, classes are being cut while the number of students increases.

"DVC gives priority to college students," explains a Campolindo counselor, "and the classes might get crowded."

Budget permitting, parents may want to consider the private sector. Among the many local institutions, Orinda Academy has been offering a very popular and comprehensive program that runs for 2 or 4 hours a day, in 3 week sessions. You will find high school math, social study and English classes as well as enrichment classes such as Digital Music Production, Rock/Jazz Band or Japanese. The Acalanes School District no longer offers credit for these classes.

Highly motivated students can explore UC Berkeley's catalog as well.

Some parents consider summer to be a time for ... vacation. "My view of the summer is that it should be to large extent free, so kids can decompress and de-stress," says Ksenija Olmer who has two daughters, one in high school and one in college. " They should learn something new, read a lot and be a bit bored so they are excited when school starts again and not exhausted from taking classes the whole summer."



Teens at work, sewnow in Lafayette Photo courtesy of sewnow

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