



About the Moorestown Parks and Recreation Department's Summer Program

The Moorestown Parks and Recreation Department has provided a low-cost Summer Camp for special needs children for the past ten years. It has evolved and expanded in size and reach – serving not just Moorestown residents but families throughout the area.

Where We Came From: In 2008 the Summer Camp for special needs children began with just 10 children between the ages of 5 and 12. The summer of 2018 had over 50 children and young adults between the ages of 5 and 23. At its inception, this four-week camp was primarily funded by a NJ State Grant. As it grew, funding came from private donations, specifically the Sean Fischel Connect Foundation. This financial support has been critical to the growth of the program that allows children with special needs to have a real camp experience and gives their families a much-needed respite from caretaking over the summer. The cost (which is the same for all children and not contingent on residency) has only increased by \$25 over the past ten years (current cost is \$100 per child for four weeks). While the Parks and Recreation Department offers many special needs programs throughout the year the Summer Camp is by far the most extensive and therefore the most demanding financially.

What We Do: In July on Mondays through Thursdays the special needs summer camp follows the public school's Extended School Year morning program. Fridays are a full day from 8:30am to 3:30pm. Most days the campers travel off-site for a variety of activities: swim at a splash park; bowl; visit a nature sanctuary or an indoor autism-focused gym and playground. Friday mornings the special needs campers join the Moorestown Children's Theatre Camp (107 kids ages 7-13) and learn a part in a musical. They "buddy" with a theater camper who mentors them where they may be acting, singing or dancing. They rehearse for three weeks and give a special performance for their families and friends the last week of camp. This unique experience forges lasting relationships.

Who We Are: A critical component to the success of the camp is the qualified and caring staff. In 2018 there were 21 on staff ranging from the Site Supervisor, who is a certified Special Needs Teacher, three Special Education teachers from Moorestown School District a Special Needs para-professional and a Moorestown School District registered nurse. College students with an interest in special education and high school students rounded out the staff.

Impact on Families: Summers are particularly challenging for families with special needs children. There's a break in a child's routine with few affordable and suitable options. We fill a need for many families who are burdened financially by subsidizing the cost and by accepting a wide range of children with disabilities. Children from Maple Shade, Delran, Cinnaminson, Mt. Laurel, Riverside, South Hampton, Willingboro, Voorhees and Cherry Hill have attended our summer camp. This program has become a respected and trusted entity in the special needs community, whose needs continue to escalate.



About the Moorestown Parks and Recreation Department's Other Programs

CHALLENGER BASEBALL PROGRAM:

The Challenger Program is an adaptive baseball program for individuals with physical and intellectual challenges. The free program is open to individuals ages 5 to 23. Challenger participants play at Pryor Park in Moorestown. Gloves and bats are provided, and every player has a chance to go up to bat each inning, and the program is open to families outside of Moorestown as well.



S.M.A.S.H. (Social Meeting after School Hours):

An after school program for teens and young adults between the ages of 13-21. Activities will include Karate, Music, Art, Yoga, Cooking, Pre-vocational Activities and Games.

This program is designed to help kids with learning disabilities, giving them hands-on life skills activities. S.M.A.S.H not only provides a wonderful after-school club; the learned skills assist these young people with future employment possibilities and ways to contribute to their community.

TOPSOCCER PROGRAM:

The Maple Shade TOPSoccer Program and the Moorestown Department of Parks and Recreation are offering an inclusive soccer program open to children ages 3-21 with special needs. The program offers a modified version of the game of soccer designed to provide a fun, relaxed, and active environment for children with special needs to participate with the help of a "Buddy".

