



SUMMER FUN *in the City*

By Paige Murphy

When it's time to choose the right camp for your young kids, a well-rounded program with a variety of offerings may be the place they'll never forget.

Parents faced with the choice of which New York City summer camp to send their kids, often struggle with the many different options. No one knows about that more than Steve Levin, Director of Camp Léman at Léman Manhattan Preparatory School in the Financial District, who has been guiding parents through the summer camp labyrinth for more than 20 years.

While in recent years Levin has seen a shift toward specialized camps, he often encourages parents to strongly consider more well-rounded options. "Children have a whole lifetime to become 'experts'

in something," he says. "First, they need to build important skills such as self-esteem, confidence, risk-taking and resilience. Camp can provide children with the opportunity to adapt to new situations and make friends, [which is] critical for their social and emotional development." Léman's summer camp, for example, enrolls both Léman students and students from the community, enabling campers to have the continuity of familiar faces from school while introducing them to new friends.

Levin also notes that parents are looking for diversity in their kids' summer camp experience. "All-around camps offer students the opportunity to explore a variety of interests and activities, rather than focusing on just one area as specialty camps tend to do. Specialty camps are excellent for older children, but may not be developmentally the right fit for younger ones," explains Levin. "In our day camp program, children three years old through fifth grade experience diverse activities, ranging from swimming and rooftop playground fun to Silly Science and woodworking. In addition, older students [starting at the fourth grade level] can hone a

specific interest in our Summer Workshops, focusing on culinary, concert band and forensic sciences."

Another trend Levin sees is the movement to include academics in summer programs. "Many parents – and students too, for that matter – are looking for quasi-academic and straight-academic enrichment camps," he explains. "Kids need time to decompress after an academically-challenging school year. All-around camps can work on the soft skills that kids also need to be successful in their academic pursuits. These skills that may not have as much focus during the academic year."

And don't forget, while New York City may be a great place to raise a family, its fast pace and competitive nature can sometimes be as stressful for kids as it is for many adults. This is why Levin encourages parents to help their child embrace the traditional attributes of camp, mainly having fun and creating memories. As Levin recommends, "Rather than focus on competition and winning, place an emphasis on participation, effort, and risk-taking to help your child make the most of his or her summer camp experience."