**Leave No Child Inside!**

**(And Send Them to Camp)**

Tim Jordan, M.D.

I read that quote in David Louv’s book “Last Child in the Woods” and I loved it’s meaning. He talks about how disconnected most kids are today from the natural world, creating a kind of “nature deficit disorder”.

And that is where I believe summer camps can make a huge difference.

I have been running summer camps now for 19 years and one of my favorite things about it is the slowed down pace and rhythm of our days and evenings. We’re unplugged from all electronics, we’re walking everywhere, and there is less structure than our usual world.

Studies have shown that nature has a calming effect on children. It’s beneficial for kids to take a vacation from all the busyness and dramas of their lives. Living out in nature takes kids out of their comfort zones and that’s a good thing. They learn a lot about themselves by coping with a new environment and making new friends. It’s a confidence builder.

A lot of kids are anxious about being away from the comforts of home and family for camp. They may be worried about whether or not they’ll be able to make new friends or to handle the rigor of spiders and lake water. There is something empowering about “feeling your fears and doing it anyway”; it allows kids to maneuver on their own through the camp week and then to proudly be able to say “I did it!”

I also like that campers get to experience a different kind of fun at camp. Taking long hikes, canoe adventures, campfire songs, star-gazing and watching sunsets is a nice balance to all the screen time and supervised activities of their regular lives. You just don’t get to play 4-team-tug-o-war in a lake, create silly songs for a talent show or have a watermelon spitting contest everyday at home!

And it really is true that kids make friends-for-life and also life long memories at summer camp. There really is nothing like getting away from it all for a week, spending time in nature, having a blast with new friends, and proving to yourself that you can make it on your own.

*Tim Jordan, M.D., is a behavioral pediatrician and author of several books including "Keeping Your Family Grounded When You're Flying by the Seat of Your Pants." Dr. Jordan has owned CAMP WELOKI for 19 years and has been facilitating weekend retreats and summer camps. His counseling practice in Chesterfield is focused primarily on girls in grade school through college. He has spoken internationally to parents and professionals for 24 years on parenting and child-related issues. His web site is* [www.weloki.com.](http://www.weloki.com)