

# The Journal

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**LOTTERY WINNERS** SCARSDALE, SLEEPY HOLLOW, TH RESIDENTS ARE FRESHLY MINTED

**SUMMER ACTIVITIES**

## SAFE AT CAMP

Low number of injuries reflect compliance with rules designed to keep kids from harm



Sixth-grader Andrew Baker reacts after not being able to secure a seat against fourth-grader Andrew Costa and second-grader Olivia Hexner in musical chairs during winter camp in Eastchester. TANIA SAVAYAN/THE JOURNAL NEWS

The following camps had the most injuries or illnesses in the summer of 2013 according to records kept by Rockland and Westchester counties:

**10**

Camp Ramah, Nyack

**9**

Ramapo Country Day Camp, Airmont

**5**

Eastchester Recreation Camp Galaxy

**4**

Deer Mountain Day Camp, Pomona

**4**

Badger Sports Club Camp, Larchmont

**By Ernie Garcia**  
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Tony Sayegh didn't hesitate sending his two older sons to the town of Eastchester's summer camp when they were younger because he was once a counselor there.

"Having worked in the environment, I know what an ultimate premium is put on safety," said Sayegh, whose youngest attended the 2013 summer day camp at the Siwanoy Country Club, where he also didn't have concerns.

"We're members (of Siwanoy) and we're also familiar with the kind of supervision the club puts on the camp. Anything related to children is dealt with in the most careful and high security manner," said Sayegh, a political consultant and former Tuckahoe village trustee.

Summer camp has become a necessity for many working parents, who begin to make their summer plans early in the spring. Safety is paramount in those decisions.

With thousands of children attending the region's summer camps in 2013, Westchester County received 55 injury reports and Rockland County got 28. Local health officials said the low numbers reflect compliance with rules designed to keep children safe.



Joe Farina of Nanuet helps his daughter, Gianna, 5, during Ramapo's February Break Camp in Hillburn on Feb. 19. PETER CARR/THE JOURNAL NEWS

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Children play during the Town of Ramapo's February Break Camp on Feb. 19 at the Joseph T. St. Lawrence Community Health and Sports Center in Hillburn. PETER CARR/THE JOURNAL NEWS

## CAMP: Few instances of injury, illness

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"We do run a really tight ship with our children," said Peter DeLucia, Westchester's assistant health commissioner.

A review of incident lists for 2012 and 2013 from the health departments in Rockland and Westchester found that most summer camps reporting incidents had numbers in the low single digits and some reported none.

The Journal News obtained the counties' incident lists through Freedom of Information Law requests filed in September. Putnam County would not release its data, claiming a lack of certification of its reports by the state.

State law requires summer camp operators to file injury, illness and abuse reports with county health departments. The town of Lewisboro's teen camp and the JCC of Mid-Westchester's Camp Gadol both reported abuse incidents in 2012, but the camp directors and county health officials said the allegations were withdrawn or unsubstantiated.

The camp with the most reported incidents in 2013 was Camp Ramah in Nyack, with eight illnesses and two injuries. In Westchester County the camp with the most incidents last year was the Eastchester recreation department's Camp Galaxy, which reported five



Melinah Sala, right, smiles at Nadia Konde at Eastchester Recreation's mini day camp. TANIA SAVAYAN/THE JOURNAL NEWS

injuries.

Amy Skopp Cooper, Camp Ramah's director, said the illnesses, four each on two different days, were due to chicken pox and head lice among siblings from two families. The two injuries required stitches but the children returned to camp activities the same day, she said.

About 750 children attended Camp Ramah in 2013 over the course of the summer and the camp keeps four nurses on the premises.

"Thankfully it's remarkably low," Skopp Cooper said of her camp's injury rate.

John P. Swick, a recreation leader for Eastchester, said his summer camp had more than 500 children during the six-week program with a standard cost of \$925. He said the five injuries were minor incidents that occurred while the children were

playing organized sports, which include basketball, kickball and hockey.

Swick said that parents concerned about safety should ask about supervision and whether the staff goes beyond the basic requirements. He said Camp Galaxy exceeds state requirements by having one staffer for every six children.

The state's requirements include certified lifeguards or water safety instructors trained in CPR, at least one counselor for every 10 children aged 8 or older and one for every eight children younger than 8, among other rules. State regulations also entitle parents to review a camp's plans and inspection and investigation reports filed at county health departments.

The requirements are posted at [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov).

Karen Hertz said that

when her two children were young she sent them to Briarcliff's municipal day camp. Hertz, an attorney and publicist, said the camp had a good reputation among her neighbors and parents in her kids' school.

"You feel a sense of community and family, and you know that people are looking out for your kid," Hertz said.

When Hertz's son was 9 he was hit in the eye by a baseball while attending a sports camp, but she didn't fault the staff.

Injuries in summer camps are low nationwide. The American Camp Association's Healthy Camp Study in 2009 found that the risk of serious injury at resident summer camps is relatively low compared with other popular youth activities.

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