

PARENT

HANDBOOK

Camp Mary Help 2025



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Welcome



Dear Families and Friends of Camp Mary Help!

Welcome aboard the fun adventure that is Mary Help of Christians' Summer Camp, or simply Camp Mary Help! Get ready for a summer jam-packed with memories that will make your child jump for joy!

Camp Mary Help is all about creating a safe space where fun, learning and growth collide. We blend faith-driven values with thrilling activities to craft a one-of-a-kind experience that sparks personal and spiritual development.

We are beyond excited for the upcoming summer and are all in to make it an epic one for your child. Your trust is our fuel, and we can't wait to sprinkle some magic onto your family's summer. Brace yourselves for an unforgettable adventure at Camp Mary Help!

See you real soon,

**Fr. John J. Serio, SDB
Director
Mary Help of Christians Center**



Mission

Camp Mary Help embodies the essence of Saint Don Bosco's vision by creating a nurturing environment that combines elements of home, school, church, and playground to offer children a holistic and enriching experience. By blending fun, safety and spirituality, the camp aims to provide campers with a unique and memorable adventure not found elsewhere. The diverse range of activities available at the Mary Help of Christians Center ensures that every child can find something they enjoy and engage in, fostering personal growth and spiritual development.

Through a focus on creating a familial atmosphere with caring staff and companions, Camp Mary Help encourages campers to build lasting friendships, explore their faith and be inspired by positive Christian role models. By following Don Bosco's philosophy of integrating faith and fun seamlessly, the camp strives to make each visit a joyful and fulfilling experience for all participants. The commitment to offering a welcoming and inclusive space where campers feel valued and eager to return underscores the camp's dedication to upholding its mission and promises to the young individuals it serves.

home, school,
church &
playground

DON BOSCO'S WAY





Core Values



Camp Mary Help is guided by four fundamental core values upon which all aspects of camp life are built. These values serve as the foundation for creating a nurturing and inclusive environment for campers.

Faith

First and foremost, faith is central to the camp's identity. It is through faith that the camp community finds God in all experiences, interactions and relationships. While Camp Mary Help is rooted in the Catholic tradition, it welcomes young people from all backgrounds to foster a sense of belonging and facilitate a genuine connection with the divine.

Joy

The spirit of joy permeates all camp activities and interactions, creating a vibrant atmosphere where campers and staff alike can celebrate the blessings in their lives. By fostering joy and cheerfulness, the camp becomes a playground where everyone can experience the fullness of life. This emphasis on joy is integral to making Camp Mary Help a place of happiness and fulfillment for all.





Core Values



continued

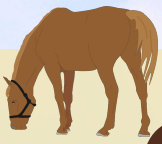
Respect

Reason-loving kindness is the cornerstone of creating a culture of respect at Camp Mary Help. By valuing and appreciating each individual's unique qualities, the camp cultivates an environment where everyone feels heard and understood. This atmosphere of respect enables campers to embrace new experiences, learn from one another and grow both personally and socially.

Community

Through faith, joy and respect, a strong sense of community is forged at Camp Mary Help, where diversity is celebrated, and all individuals are welcomed with open arms. This inclusive and familial environment embodies the camp's mission of creating a home away from home for everyone.





Camp Activities

SO WHAT DO WE DO?

Campers are divided into age appropriate groups with whom they will participate in activities together. Each of the groups will travel in rotations together from activity to activity. Each group will consist of 10-15 campers and be led by at least 1 senior counselor. The senior counselors will be assisted by junior counselors and activities coordinators to ensure a great ratio of staff to camper.

Each day will see your camper experience a variety of exciting challenges and new adventures. We offer five longer periods of roughly 50 minutes in length. During each of these five periods, your camper will spend time participating in organized activities in our pool, alongside the lakefront, split time between our barn and our sports fields and our gymnasium (weather permitting).

Most activities will be the same during the week for each group, but may take place on different days. Some activities vary each week of camp, so as to provide a new experience and sense of adventure for our campers.

Each day also contains a few smaller activities. This includes Mass, faith time, lunch, free time, and our "Goodnight" which is a closing prayer and thought for the day.



Swimming, Kayaking, Tubing, Canoeing, Archery, Fishing, Soccer, Floor is Lava, Volleyball, Animal Care, Kickball, Nature Exploring, Pickleball, Basketball, Tennis, Chess, Gaga Ball, Horseback Riding, Arts and Crafts, Singing, Dancing, Boating, Science Experiments, Acting, Foosball, and so much more.

The groupings by age are as follows:

Grigio 5-6

Savio ages 7-9

Vicuna ages 10-11

Mazzarello ages 12-13

Bosco ages 14-15



Camp wrist bands must be worn every camp day – no exceptions! This helps us to identify our campers from a distance and to ensure they are in the right location.

Camp Schedule

By Period*

7:00-8:00AM	Early Arrival*
8:00-8:25	Regular Arrival
8:25-8:40	Welcome
8:40-9:20	Mass
9:20-10:10	Period 1
10:10-11:00	Period 2
11:00-11:50	Period 3
11:50-12:00	Prep for Lunch
12:00-1:00	Lunch/Outdoor Play
1:00-1:50	Period 4
1:50-2:50	Snack/Faith Time
2:50-3:40	Period 5
3:40-4:00	Salesian Goodnight
4:00-4:25	Departure
4:25-6:00	Late Departure*

Time slots noted with a * are an additional cost.



Payments & Registration



- **Deposit:** To secure a spot for your child at Camp Mary Help, a \$100 deposit (per week and per camper) is due at the time of your registration. This is NOT a registration fee. This is a deposit which will go towards the full tuition of camp.
- **Discounts:** There is a 5% discount available for registering multiple campers from the same family. There is also a 5% discount available for registering for multiple sessions. These discounts can be combined for a total of 10% off your week fee.
- **Payment Plan:** At the time of registration, you have the option to either pay in full OR set up an installment plan. If you select the installment plan, your remaining balance will be broken up into monthly installments which will process on the 1st of each month until June. At which point, you will have paid your balance in full. All registrations after June 1st will be required to pay their camp balance in full at the time of registration. **If you will struggle to make payments according to the schedule, please contact us at the camp office. We will be more than willing to work with you.**
- **Credit Card Payments:** Credit card payments are accepted through our parent dashboard and online registration. Please note, there is a 3% service fee for all credit card transactions.
- **Cash/Check Payments:** Cash/check payments are also available. If this is your preferred method of payment, you will complete the registration process online as usual. However, when it is time to provide your payment details, you will exit out and mail your payment instead. All checks should be made out to the Mary Help of Christians Center. Please be sure to note your campers name and weeks attending.
- **Scholarships:** Scholarships are available for families with low income. Inquire with us at the camp office. Finances are no reason for a child to miss out. **WE WANT TO HELP!**
- *Please note that if a check bounces, your child will not be allowed to attend camp until the payment is settled, and checks will not be accepted for future tuition payments.*

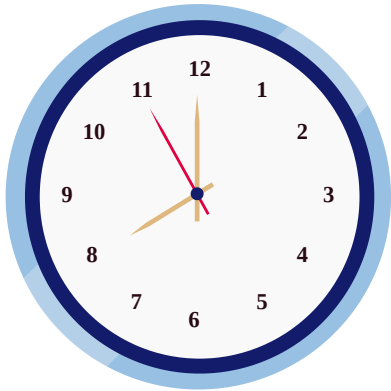
CANCELLATION/REFUND POLICY

- **Your initial \$100 deposit (per camper and per session) is non refundable.** We will refund the rest of your camp fees if you notify us in writing at least 7 days prior to the start of your first week of camp. There are **no refunds if you cancel within 7 days of the start of your camp season or after your first week of camp.** Camp Mary Help will not deduct or reimburse for days missed from camp tuition. There are no refunds if you camper is removed due to illness.
- When enrolling for a week of camp, you are reserving time, space, staff and provisions for your child, whether he/she attends.
- If camp is closed due to inclement weather (i.e. tropical storm/hurricane), no refund will be made, nor credits applied to a future week. You will be notified via email and text message of any camp closings.

Camp Hours



- **Regular drop off begins at 8:00am and ends at 8:25am.**
- **Regular pick up begins at 4:00pm and ends at 4:25pm.**

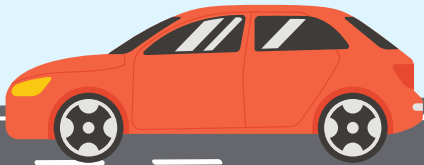


Extended Hours

- **Extended Hours:** Early drop off and late pick up is now being offered as an additional option **(for an extra fee)**.
- By registering for this option, you will be able to drop off your camper as early as **7:00am**.
- You will also be able to pick up your camper as late as **6:00pm**.
- There will be no drop off or pick up lines during these times. You will need to park your car and walk to the office for drop off and pick up.
- Please note, there is **NO** option for “ONLY early drop off,” or “ONLY late pick up.” If you need one or the other, even for just a single day, this is the option for you.
- If you arrive early, you will need to wait until 7:00am before we can accept your camper.
- If you are running late, please call our office (813) 626-6191 x 1021 or text us using the online platform to notify us.



Drop-off



Drop off is from 8:00am-8:25am every day. The drop off location for all campers will be located on our porch on the east side of our main building (lakeside).

If parents arrive before 8:00am, campers must stay in their vehicle and wait in the drop-off line until 8:00am when a staff member is present to sign-in the camper.

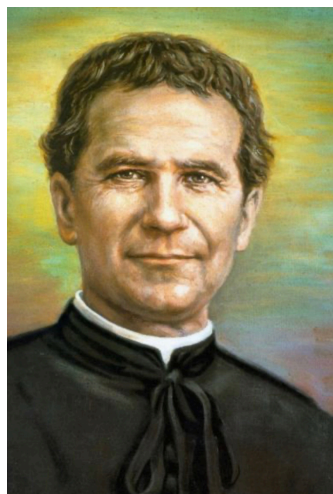
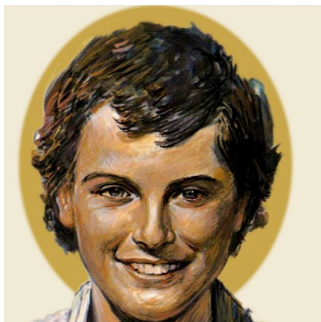
All campers should be in attendance before 8:25am in order for our program to start on time.

EARLY DROP OFFS

Campers will be allowed to sign-in for camp before 8:00am **ONLY** if they have registered for our extended hours. This **MUST** be done in advance.

LATE DROP OFFS

If you arrive after 8:40am, please park your car in our parking lot and walk your camper to our camp office.



Pick-up



PICK UP

- **Pick up is between 4:00pm-4:25pm daily.**
- Cars may line up in front of the silver gate by the front porch, extending to the gymnasium. The gate will open at 4:00pm where cars will drive through to the pavilion, displaying their car tag.
- If you are running late, please call our office (813) 626-6191 x 1021 or text us using the online platform to notify us.

CAR TAGS

- On the first day at camp, the camp staff will give you an Approved Driver Car Tag with the child's name on it. You are welcome to take multiple tags for family members to assist with pick up.
- The **Car Tag must be visible and present** for the child to be picked up and signed out of camp each day.
- Vehicles without these Car Tags will be asked to pull to the side of the pick-up line and asked for their ID. Once we have their ID the parent/guardian of the camper desired to be picked up will be contacted and notified of the situation.
- Campers will not be allowed to leave in vehicles that are not approved by the parent/guardian.

APPROVED ADULTS FOR SIGN OUT

- If someone other than a parent will be picking up children from camp, camp administration must be informed ahead of time.
- When you register as a family, each adult will be provided with a unique pin number. Please keep this number handy as it will help us to identify parents and guardians.
- Using our online system, you will be able identify which adults are allowed to pick up your camper.
- **Please make administrative staff aware of anyone who should not sign out your child.**

EARLY PICK UP

- If a camper is to be picked up early, camp **staff should be notified** during morning drop off or you must contact the camp office by email at campmaryhelp@mhctampa.org. You may also text us on our camp phone number.
- If we do not receive a notice via phone or email in advance, parents who come to the office seeking to pick up their child may be asked to wait until an activity period has ended.
- Pick up location is in the Camp Office located on the lakefront porch.
- We cannot accommodate early pickups after 3:30pm, unless the camp office is notified in advance.

LATE PICK UP

- **If you arrive after 4:40PM**, you will be considered "Late," and will be registered for extended hours. **Your account will be charged** the regular rate for our extended hours program.



Code of Conduct

BEHAVIOR

We expect and do our best to guide campers in appropriate ways of acting and participating in activities. However, sometimes campers lose focus of our core values and make mistakes. Our staff is fully committed to working through these mistakes with our campers and their families, but we also have to be mindful of the well-being of our other campers, both in terms of their safety and their joy.

Cursing or Name Calling

- Bad words and names have a tendency to "slip out". We are not looking to punish any campers for age appropriate "accidents," though we will work on correcting their choice of words.
- When these same bad words or names become a reoccurring event, or a "trend," we will need to reach out to families to discuss a course of action.
- If the foul language is directed at someone with aggression or using hateful and racist language, the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately.
- If this behavior continues, we reserve the right to dismiss the camper.

Misuse of Hands

- We want to make sure that we are keeping our hands and objects to ourselves, while respecting the Camp's property and one another. At times, there are age appropriate occurrences which we will work to redirect.
- Depending on the severity of these occurrences, or if it becomes an unwelcome trend, we will reach out to parents to discuss a course of action.

We have a zero-tolerance policy, which will result in immediate dismissal from camp, for the following:

- Fighting
- Bullying
- Drugs, alcohol, or tobacco products, including vapes
- Weapons
- Advances, activities, or threats that are sexual in nature



Dress Code



- **Camp shirts are no longer required! Instead, we will use a colored wrist band system to help keep track of our camper groups.**
- You will be given a colored wrist band during drop off on the first day. We ask that your child keep the wrist band on for the week. If it falls off or if they lose it, they will be given a replacement.
- We will sell a shirt for fun from our camp store but it is totally optional. Options to pre-order the shirt will be available during enrollment.

- Since this is a Catholic summer camp, we ask that campers **dress appropriately and modestly** for the activities in which they will participate.
- We ask that shorts/skirts are no shorter than mid-thigh and have a loose styled fit. Spandex are not appropriate attire.
- **Male campers** must wear t-shirts at all activities, except at the pool/waterfront.
- **Female campers** must wear a modest one-piece bathing suit at pool/waterfront activities, or a t-shirt over their two-piece suits.
- **Shorts are recommended** for all campers due to the active nature of water activities.
- All campers must wear **close-toed shoes** while at camp.



Packing List

TO BRING:

- **WATER BOTTLE (labeled)**
- **An extra t-shirt to change into**
- **A towel**
- **Appropriate bathing suit**
- **Sunscreen**
- **Insect repellent**
- **Close toed shoes**
- **Water shoes/water sneakers (highly recommended)**
- **Backpack**



It is recommended that parents put their camper's full name on all of their items. Camp Mary Help is not responsible for replacing lost items or lost/dirtied Camp t-shirts. However, we will have a lost and found where you can look for any misplaced items!

DO NOT BRING:

- **Jeans** (it gets really hot)
- **Expensive clothing** (we are not responsible if things get ripped)
- **Any valuable items** (we are not responsible if they break or get lost)
- **Dangle jewelry**
- **Items that promote tobacco, alcohol, vulgar slogans or innuendoes**
- **Flammable items**
- **Drugs, alcohol, tobacco products or weapons**
- **Cell phones, AirPods or other electronic devices****

***It is best if cell phones or other electronic devices stay at home. If campers bring them, they must stay out of sight as they are not part of our program. If they are used without permission, they will be taken away. If taken, they will be given to parents/guardians at pick up.*



Lunch & Snack



LUNCH

- We will provide our campers with **a meal option every day**. This is included in your registration. We hope to provide families with a menu prior to their week of camp.
- We are **not able to accommodate special diets**. So if your camper is a picky eater or has food allergies, we would advise packing a lunch. They are free to look at our lunch option and then determine if they'd prefer your lunch or ours.
- We will store all lunches and snacks in personalized cubbies on the outside porch. Please note, they are not animal proof. Please make sure that all lunches and snacks are properly closed to prevent birds and squirrels from getting at your camper's food.

SNACK

- Each afternoon, we will take a short break and provide our campers with a simple snack. For example, pretzels, cookies, chips, etc.
- One day a week, we have volunteers from our church who will provide snow-cones to all campers.
- Your child is welcome to bring additional snacks in the case they have a preference. As long as it doesn't become a distraction, they will have access to their snacks at various times during the day.

CAMP STORE

- We will have a simple snack bar available each day where campers can buy candy, granola bars, Gatorade and other treats. They range in price from \$1.00 to \$2.00.
- We will also sell mugs, t-shirts and other camp swag. These prices will vary with a wider range.
- This is optional, and you have the ability to create a pre-paid debit system for your camper. However, any money leftover will become a donation to our program.
- Campers will only be able to spend \$4 per day on food and beverage items to minimize over purchasing.
- The grounds of Mary Help of Christians have vending machines available. We are not monitoring the campers' use of that, nor do we own the machines in the case of a bad purchase.
 - NOTE - We are not responsible for lost money.



WATER BOTTLES

Your camper should bring a reusable water bottle every day, with their name clearly marked. We will have water stations all throughout camp so that your camper can refill their water. We want to ensure that all campers are properly hydrated.

If your camper loses their water bottle, please encourage them to look in our Lost and Found. If your item is found and properly labeled, we will place the item in your camper's personalized cubby.

Medications & Health Concerns



MEDICATIONS

- **Prescribed medications must be checked in** at the camp office **with the completed Permission to Hold/Dispense Medication Form.**
- The medication must be delivered in the **pharmacy labeled container** listing the student's name, the physician's name, the medication and the instructions for this medication.
- Camp staff will not administer medication to any camper. **Campers must be able to self-administer medication.**
- Records will be kept for the camp season that will include the following information:
 - Date, time, and name of camper receiving medication
 - Dosage taken
 - Signature of administration staff who oversaw the medication administered
- Camp staff will not provide any over the counter medication (including topical).

PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS

- If your camper is not feeling up for a day's worth of activities, but is healthy, we will still encourage them to join their group from activity to activity. We will not force them into any activities that they are not ready to handle.
- Please inform camp administration of any physical or mental restrictions of your campers. Such limitations will be kept confidential unless counselors or staff need to know to properly assist a child. This information will help us create the most safe environment for your camper to thrive in.
- In the case that a camper requires professional care or individual attention that camp staff can not accommodate, in order to assure a safe environment for them, they will not be able to continue at Camp.
- Administrative staff will treat routine/common injuries. If the injury is more severe, we will take immediate steps to secure medical treatment while making every effort to notify the listed contacts on the campers file. If there are any changes in the emergency contact information, please notify camp staff immediately to update the contact information.

SICKNESS

- If your camper is not feeling well prior to the start of the camp day, we would urge you to keep your child home that day. This is both for the sake of the camper and so as to not expose other campers to any illnesses.
- If your camper vomits or comes to the camp staff with a fever of 100.3 or higher, they will be sent home immediately.

Camp Counselors

During our summer, we have two types of counselors: Junior Counselors and Senior Counselors.

Our Junior Counselors are volunteers who are just a bit older than our campers. Many of them were campers last summer or the year before. They experienced, first hand, the beauty of Camp Mary Help and want to be a part of our mission! They will take on a variety of roles to help fill our camp with joy while helping to animate our activities! They are trained in appropriate ways to monitor and handle situations. However, they are always told to direct any issues to senior counselors or administration. We ask that if you have any issues with a junior counselor, that you speak to administration directly.

Our Senior Counselors come to us with a great love of Camp Mary Help and a commitment to providing your camper with the best experience possible. They are all trained and background checked. They will be responsible for overseeing small groups of campers (between 10-15) as they journey from activity to activity. At each location, they will be partnered up with other adults to oversee the safety of the activity. As issues arise, our senior counselors are asked to notify administration of any concerns. We would ask that if you have any issues with a senior counselor, that you speak to administration directly.

NOTE - Camp Mary Help strongly recommends that staff do not interact with campers outside of Camp. This includes but is not limited to:



- *Babysitting, families inviting staff to a camper's home or vice versa.*
- *Counselors are PROHIBITED to exchange social media, phone numbers, or online networking sites with campers per Salesian Safe Environment Practices.*
- *Staff and volunteers are NOT permitted to use their own vehicles to transport children at any time.*
- *Our staff will create a friendly environment with campers but it is important to have strong boundaries with these interactions which should only take place through camp activities. This is explained to our staff during their week of training and they understand to not have interactions with campers outside of camp programming.*
- *Please do not ask our staff to go against our recommendation of keeping communication solely to camp hours.*

Contact Us

Our goal for this summer is to provide your children with the best summer camp experience possible. Our entire staff of counselors and administration works to get to know our campers and their families. If at any point, you have questions, concerns, or if you'd like to add an extra week to your summer please don't hesitate to reach out!

Camp Mary Help uses emails and text messages for announcements. If you are not receiving messages from camp, please contact us so we can update our records with the correct contact information. You must opt in to receive and send text messages from us.

(813) 626-6191 x 1021 

CampMaryHelp@mhctampa.org

Our Staff:

Stephen Watkins, Camp Director



****Staff listing will be updated closer to the start of camp.**

