

This is Lieutenant Roger McCort from The Salvation Army in Eureka with today's Community Comment.

It's not too late! I know it seems like half of the summer has slipped by already and you aren't sure where the time has gone, but it's not too late to send your kids to camp! Or even to spend a week at one yourself.

Summer camp attendance has declined in recent years, being replaced for many youths by activities such as mandatory summer school, binge-watching zombie videos, or trying to master the latest console game from the deep pocket their rear end has worn into the couch cushion. Savvy parents may recognize that forcing their child outside into actual sunlight exposure could reduce the need for expensive Vitamin D supplements down the road, not to mention giving them an opportunity to exercise more than their thumbs for a change.

Fewer than one out of seven kids have any kind of summer camp experience these days. Possibly because they or their parents have little or no idea of what that kind of experience might entail. If your only information about camps comes from popular movies, you are likely to view them suspiciously. Hollywood shows us inept and bumbling administrators and counsellors who are tyrants who haze children or are self-obsessed and neglect them. All while the children get hunted down by some kind of unstoppable serial killer.

Wow! If that was all I knew, I'd never let my kids anywhere near a summer camp! Fortunately, in real life there is no equivalent to the fictions of the silver screen.

When you send your child to camp, you are signing them up for a week or more where they will be able to learn new things in a safe and nurturing environment. Many camps are outdoor camps. That means kids will be hiking, swimming, learning about plants and animals, and generally having a great time outside while picking up some new skills and making some new friends.

At the best of these camps there is no Wi-Fi signal and no place to plug in a smartphone charger, meaning that kids actually need to interact with each other and their environment off-line instead of through a screen. Studies consistently show that time spent unplugged out in a natural setting aids both physical and psychological health.

It doesn't all have to be about the wilderness though. There are also camps for every sport, from football to basketball to hockey to lacrosse. Swimming camps and gymnastics camps.

Even volleyball camps and soccer camps! Whatever sport your kid loves, you can get them out to learn and do more with it.

If the outside world is just too much to bear, how about an inside camp? You could enroll in a math or language immersion camp or one for programming. Or one to help the budding artist or photographer. They could even go to camp to play chess or learn how to play the clarinet.

If you just needed to get your video game addict out of the house for a few days, there are even computer and video game camps. Let them put a dent in someone else's couch for a week, right?

It's not too late. If you look around, you'll find plenty of opportunity. In fact, there are adult camp experiences in every one of these categories too. So get out there and get to camp!

Grace and peace to you. This has been Lt. Roger McCort with today's KINS Community Comment.