

Sciencenter Connections: Sciencenter offers passport to summer fun



LARA LITCHFIELD-KIMBER
Sciencenter Connection

It has been long recognized that children who take long breaks from learning over the summer can face academic setbacks once school resumes in the fall. Recent estimates suggest that some children may actually lose more than two months of academic progress when their minds are idle during summer break. But taking a break from school does not have to mean taking a break from learning.

At the Sciencenter, families can explore science, technology, engineering and math together through fun, interactive exhibits and hands-on programs that engage, educate and empower. In the remaining weeks of summer, we invite you to use the Sciencenter as your family's anchor to summertime learning and exploration with this informal six-week mini course:

Week 1: Study the stars — Purchase your “Passport to the Solar System” for \$4 (www.sciencenter.org/saganpw/) and take a tour of the Sagan Planet walk, which runs from the center of The Commons in downtown Ithaca to the Sciencenter. Your fully stamped passport earns you one free admission to the museum. At the Sciencenter, don't miss our “Mars and Stars” exhibition, which features the new “Lunar Viewer” exhibit, an infrared camera, and even real astronaut underwear!

Week 2: Learn about an emerging technology — Check out “Nano,” the new mini-exhibition, and learn how materials behave differently at the nano-scale and how nanotechnology is all around us. Follow up with a visit to your local library to find books on the future of nanoscience.

Week 3: Focus on recycling — Learn what is recyclable, revamp your home's recycling system, and take a visit to your local recycling center. Then, visit the “Reinvention Station” to tap into your creative side as you transform recyclable materials into works of art.

Week 4: Discover ocean life — Even if your summer travels do not take you to the ocean, you can explore sea life at the “Connect to the Ocean” exhibition, which features the region's only inland marine touch tank. The Sciencenter welcomes visitors to touch the animals, including sea stars, hermit crabs and sea urchins, from 2 to 4 p.m. on Tuesdays and Sundays, and 10 a.m. to noon on Fridays.

Week 5: Explore your watershed — Start exploring watersheds at the “Ocean Bound” exhibition, then head out to the local gorges or Cayuga Lake to discover what lives in your watershed.

Week 6: Discover playground science — Bounce across the world's only Kevlar cable suspension bridge, climb a web, make music, and do much more at the Sciencenter's outdoor Emerson Science Park.

And if you *must* slide this summer, hit the slide at your local playground. That's allowed!

Lara Litchfield-Kimber is the deputy director of the Sciencenter. Sciencenter Connections appears the second Thursday of the month in Ticket.