

The Calhoun County YMCA extends its sincere gratitude to the Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust for its invaluable support in making Summer 2024 one of our most impactful yet through the Environmental STEM Summer Program. The hands-on learning experiences provided through this program offer children lasting educational benefits, bringing science and nature to life in ways that go beyond traditional classroom instruction.

At a pivotal stage in their development, school-aged children thrive on immersive learning experiences. With MBMT's generous support, the YMCA continues to instill its core values while fostering curiosity, intellectual growth, and unique opportunities that many children might not otherwise have access to. Our program serves children ages 4–14 in Calhoun County and, in alignment with the Y's mission, remains accessible to all families, including those in need, through the "Y For All" scholarship program. MBMT's contributions ensure that every child, regardless of financial background, can participate in these enriching experiences.

This year marked another year of partnership with MBMT, and it was our largest summer program to date. We welcomed **247 children**, not much of an increase over last year, but many of our participants return year after year. We have continued to overcome our waitlist issue but at this time we are limited due to space. We continue to work on securing more space so that we may open up more opportunities for our children. Daily on average we are having 176 kids in our care for camp.

Throughout the summer, we awarded **163 scholarships in June, 141 in July, and 52 in August**, despite a shorter summer due to an earlier school start date. Additionally, we provided **free transportation for all field trips, as well as complimentary meals and snacks from CCISD**, ensuring that every child received the necessary nutrition throughout the day. Parents expressed their gratitude for the program, noting the positive impact on their children's summer experience, keeping them engaged, active, and excited about learning.

### **Program Highlights**

This summer's field trips and hands-on activities provided invaluable educational opportunities, including:

- **Rockport Bay Educational Center** – Students engaged in hands-on outdoor projects near the jetty, learning about local wildlife and their habitats.
- **King Fisher Beach, Port O'Connor** – With the guidance of Texas Parks and Wildlife, children participated in a fishing excursion, gaining insights into marine resources, conservation, and water safety.
- **Lavaca-Navidad River Authority (LNRA), Edna** – A diverse range of activities, including kayaking, botany, and an educational session on reptiles led by expert Michael Price.
- **Calhoun County Extension Office** – Students experienced farm life, learning about various farm animals and their roles, as well as participating in garden maintenance and plant care.
- **Moody Gardens, Galveston** – Children attended interactive educational sessions and guided tours with specialists.

- **Space Center Houston** – One of the most exciting trips, where students explored space science, viewed life-sized spacecraft, and learned about the tools used by astronauts.

## **STEM Education**

This summer, we were also able to provide **STEM classroom instruction** led by certified teachers in small-group settings. Highlights from the curriculum included:

- **Watershed Education** – Understanding water sources, erosion, and the movement of water through the environment.
- **Fossil Exploration** – Learning about fossils, their origins, and even creating their own to take home.
- **Plant Science** – Observing plant growth from seed to maturity and learning proper care techniques.
- **The Water Cycle & Solar Energy** – Exploring natural processes that shape our environment.

## **Looking Ahead**

We are incredibly grateful to the Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust for making these opportunities possible and providing children with experiences that will shape their futures. As we prepare for Summer 2025, we anticipate even greater participation and expanded programming. Our goal is to ensure that every child who wants to attend can do so, eliminating waitlists and providing an unforgettable summer filled with learning, exploration, and growth.

Thank you again to MBMT for your continued partnership and dedication to the children of Calhoun County!