

By JESSICA CRAWFORD

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Because school is out, it is not uncommon for children to spend most of the summer months with their head in the clouds. Mid-America Air Museum intends to take full advantage of that state of mind with Camp Falcon beginning June 9.

Throughout the seven week period, there will be class time and projects every Tuesday and Thursday. Two sessions will be available each day, the first beginning at 10 a.m. and ending at noon and the second beginning at 2 p.m. and ending at 4. The cost for the program is \$7 per week. Instructor Michele Stoddard said although kids ages 8 through 12 are encouraged to attend all seven weeks of the camp, they can pick and choose if they like.

During the first week of Camp Falcon, the Tuesday and Thursday lesson will be on the history and function of kites. The second week of the program will focus on balloons, while the third will teach all about gliders. The following four weeks will instruct children on powered flight, rockets, supersonic flight and space.

“With the kites, we go in and talk about the history of kites. They will make a little kite, and we will go out and fly them,” Stoddard said. “We normally do a papiermaché hot air balloon, and we learn about the history.

“They make their own gliders to fly, we do a lot of background and we do a lot of history,” she continued. “We kind of do it in order, kites got us into balloons, balloons progressed into gliders and it just goes through the list.”

Although the classes will be taught upstairs in a classroom at the Mid-America Air Museum, Stoddard said she likes to keep the kids involved in the displays downstairs at the museum.

“We try to get out in the museum with every class,” she said. “With space, we have an actual space over there in the air museum, and we get out there in the space area. With supersonic flight, they do a scavenger hunt where they find what model airplane is here that was in, for example, the ‘Top Gun’ movie.”

One might think that there would be more boys enrolled in Camp Falcon than girls, but according to Stoddard, young ladies have been just as interested in the history of flight as the young men.

“We have actually had a few more girls than boys last year,” she said. “I mean, we have a good range of kids. Sometimes the boys overpower the class, sometimes we have more girls.”

Stoddard said the two different sessions offered each day have helped kids with busy schedules immensely, as the same thing is taught during both sessions.

“I have two different sessions, 10 a.m. to noon and 2 to 4 p.m.,” she said. “I have had people come to the morning session on Tuesday and made the afternoon session on Thursday. They are the same thing so if they have a ball schedule or library time or something – they can hit one or the other.”

At \$7 per week, not all children can participate in all seven weeks as easily as others. In an attempt to get all local children involved, Stoddard said there are sponsorship possibilities.

“We had a gentleman and a lady last year call and say, ‘Hey, we heard about this and we want to sponsor a kid,’” she said. “So if anyone would like to sponsor a child, we would love for them to be able to call and let us know.”

“Maggie at Big Brothers Big Sisters had a few kids out there that she knew would love the program but didn’t have the entry fee,” she added. “We do take sponsors so if an individual or business would like to sponsor a child that would be great.”

MAAM Director Sam Christian will be experiencing his very first Camp Falcon this year. He is excited to be a part of teaching children more about the history of flight. He feels it is a subject that has been overlooked over the years.

“I am definitely excited about this, and it is great to have this program here for the kids,” he said. “I am always very supportive of anything like this that is educational for the kids.

“Historically, the kids need to know more history, and it should be taught more in schools, I feel,” he continued. “That is what the museum is all about – teaching history. So it is great to have something like this for the kids.”

For more information regarding enrollment or sponsorship, call 624-5263.