

PETERSBURG MEDICAL CENTER YOUTH PROGRAMS Family Handbook

providing enriching experiences for youth and supporting the healthy growth and development of children and their families

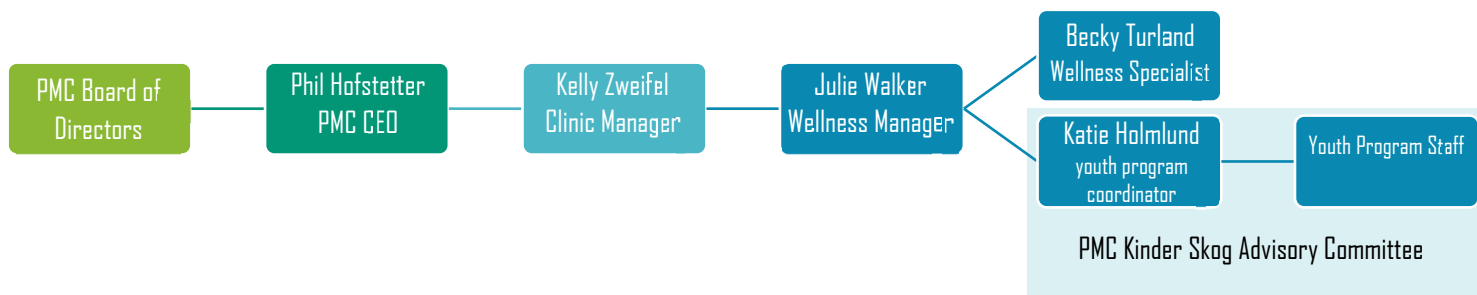
PO Box 589 Petersburg, AK 99833
Youth Program Coordinator – Katherine Holmlund
907-531-5913 or 907-772-5501

UPDATED: 01.04.2024



FOREST KINDY
BY KINDER SKOG





ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & STAFFING:

Kinder Skog: developed in 2018 as a specialized program under Good Beginnings, with support from the Petersburg Lutheran Church. Petersburg Medical Center adopted Kinder Skog in the fall of 2022 under their Community Wellness Department. We are thankful to have dedicated individuals serve Kinder Skog Nature Program. The following individuals support our program through volunteerism, fundraising, and policy/curriculum development. Program reports will be submitted to the PMC Kinder Skog Advisory Committee quarterly and to the Petersburg Medical Center Board of Directors upon request. Kinder Skog is an “exempt from licensure” youth recreational program.

ORCA Camps: Outdoor Recreation Creation & Adventure Camps are focused, week long enrichment camps for youth of various ages. The program administrator is the Youth Programming Coordinator, and ORCA Camps are “housed” under the Wellness Department of the Petersburg Community Foundation.

PODs: Originally developed to give youth an opportunity to connect outdoors during the height of the pandemic, PODs has become a welcomed addition to youth programs in Petersburg. PODs are Play Outside Days when youth have the opportunity to practice wellness activities while connecting with peers and positive adult roles models.

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION:

With respect to our staff’s work/life balance please do not call or text prior to 7:30am or after 6:00pm unless it is an urgent matter. Emails are welcome any day or time; however, responses should not be expected on the weekends.

| NAME & POSITION | PHONE | EMAIL |
|--|------------------------------|---|
| Katherine Holmlund Youth Programming Coordinator | 907-531-5913 907-772-5501 | kholmlund@pmc-health.org kinderskog@pmc-health.org |
| Becca Madsen Youth Program - Mentor | 907-772-5501 | rmadsen@pmc-health.org |
| Kaili Watkins Youth Program Mentor | 907-772-5501 | kcswanson@pmc-health.org |

YOUTH PROGRAMS STAFF INFORMATION:

PMC Youth Programs are operated by mentors with vast and varied early childhood training, certification, and experiences. Katie is Cedarsong Forest Kindergarten trained, has a degree in Elementary Education and is an American Camps Association Camp Director of added qualification. References are checked on all new employees and fingerprint background checks are required. Experienced staff will work with new employees until they are comfortable working independently with the children. Substitute teachers may be used when regular staff is not available. Volunteers may be used in the program but will never be left alone with the children. PMC Youth Programs are “exempt from licensure” recreational programs serving youth throughout the year and embracing outdoor experiences in every season.

KINDER SKOG NATURE PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY:

The goal of the Kinder Skog program is to help children gain an appreciation for the environment and to contribute toward a sense of stewardship. We strive to provide children with real world, multi-sensory, hands-on learning opportunities and experiences through science, technology, engineering, arts, and math.

Being outdoors encourages imaginative play, creativity, hand-eye coordination, balance, physical strength, sensory integration, and mental wellness. In addition to increasing problem-solving and critical thinking skills, it leads to more cooperation and teamwork while raising children's environmental awareness and developing feelings of stewardship. We practice low-impact hiking, cleaning up areas before leaving, carrying out any litter we happen upon, respectful treatment of plants, trees, animals, and insects. Mentors empower youth to become life-long lovers of recreation and teach kids how to be properly outfitted for adventure to keep themselves safe and comfortable.

Kinder Skog will explore the natural world with an eye out for how precious this planet is and how we can become stewards and keepers of the wonders we discover and learn about. We will strive to identify wildflowers, trees, animals, prints and scat, signs for travelers, names of mountains, streams, and other landmarks and develop some familiarity with maps to determine location and help identify features. We will also participate in community service projects and other outdoor/nature-based activities/projects for the benefit of our community throughout the year to emphasize helping others, kindness, and service.

FOREST KINDY – by Kinder Skog PHILOSOPHY

Rooted in the belief that children learn best through play and experiences, Forest Kindy provides a learning environment that enriches the learning outcomes provided by the Petersburg City School District. Forest Kindy is a more structured, nature-based program designed for children ages 5 and 6 who are entering kindergarten and first grade. The goal of Forest Kindy is to keep kids engaged and learning throughout the out of school times and to keep the spark of curiosity burning while working closely with our school district to support learning goals.

ORCA CAMPS PHILOSOPHY:

Outdoor Recreation Creation & Adventure Camps seek to keep kids outside and exploring. It is the philosophy of the program that kids thrive when they are given opportunities to try new skills in low-pressure and supported environments with adults serving as positive role models. ORCA Camps provide topic-specific enrichment opportunities for youth of various ages and abilities. ORCA Camps have included: Mitkof Marine Sciences, Tongass Tuesdays, Let's Play Petersburg, Native Youth Olympics Camp, Super Kids Camp, Wind Energies Camp, **Theater Camp**, among others.

PODs PHILOSOPHY:

Petersburg Medical Center "Play Outside Days" provide youth with hands-on nature based recreational enrichment. One of the goals of PODs is to teach kids how to recreate safely with the use of proper gear, planning ahead, and practicing skills. PODs focuses on physical, social and mental health in youth in a supportive and inclusive environment.

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS:

To enroll in PMC Youth Programs children must be 5 through 14 years old, **four-year-olds entering kindergarten in the fall may be permitted to enroll with the approval of the Youth Program Coordinator.** All students' files must have a completed enrollment form, field trip permission slip, handbook agreement, and child emergency contact information, along with other program documents on file before the first day of attendance. Children identified by their parents/guardians as having special needs or significant medical needs must meet with the program coordinator to develop and implement a plan of care for the child, addressing all accommodations. We accept all children we can reasonably accommodate. PMC Youth Programs shall be free from discrimination based on age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, ethnic group, marital or parental status, physical or mental disability, or any other unlawful consideration.

ACTIVITIES & LOCATION:

The 'home base' for PMC Youth Programs is the **Holy Cross House at Petersburg Lutheran Church.** It is a place to store school backpacks/gear, eat snack and occasionally do an art project or play games. Most of our time will be spent playing in the muskeg, forest, beaches and harbors and other inspiring outdoor locations. Example activities include hiking, muskeg exploration, fort building, arts & crafts, tree climbing, bush-crafts, whittling, fishing from shore, and more. We do encourage group decision making in what activities we do and where we explore. Youth Programs will utilize the outdoor space of

Petersburg Lutheran Church during transition times before leaving for an adventure and upon return. PMC Youth Programs also has a "gear shed" located at Stedman Elementary School, during summer months this may be considered the home base for some programs/groups.

SCHEDULE:

Kinder Skog: During the school semesters Kinder Skog's hours of operation are from school dismissal time to 17:15. The school has various dismissal times for grades, and special events, Kinder Skog will accommodate those various dismissal times. Kinder Skog will include closure dates on the session enrollment agreement. Each session's enrollment agreement will have the most up to date program schedule.

"Fall Session" = September – December

"Spring Session" = January – May

"Summer Camp" = June - August – morning session from 8:00-13:00, afternoon session from 13:00-17:15

Forest Kindy: Summer Session: TBD for 2024

ORCA Camps & PODs: Schedule will vary depending on the camp.

TELEVISION VIEWING/COMPUTER TIME:

PMC Youth Programs believes strongly in "active bodies, active minds". Television viewing and computer usage will be rare and only on special occasion. Time allowed will not exceed one and half hours in a 24-hour period. Any content viewed will be age appropriate to the youngest participant in the group. Computer usage will be for Science Technology Engineering Arts Math activities such as using our digital microscope and driving our submersible Remote Operated Vehicle, and so on.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN:

Children attending PMC Youth Programs will be always supervised. Staff will determine program capacity while maintaining ratios that ensure the safety of participants and staff. Our facility maintains caregiver and child attendance records to reflect children are always supervised. PMC Youth Programs will prevent exposure of children to individuals, animals, and situations posing a possible danger, including:

- riding a motorized all-terrain vehicle or snowmobile
- playing with motorized propelled objects (exception is our submersible Remote Operated Vehicle – ROV, and KidWind kits)
- playing on or near or jumping on any type of trampoline

TUITION RATES & FEES

Kinder Skog & Forest Kindy use enrollment numbers to determine the program budget therefore enrollment is based on the session. Sessions run from January through May, June through August, and September through December.

ORCA Camps and PODs rates will be dependent upon grant funding as well as the camp material needs and staffing requirements.

Program Fees:

| | Kinder Skog | Forest Kindy | ORCA Camps | PODs |
|---|-------------|--------------|------------|------|
| Safety Gear Fee \$15.00/session | ✓ | | | |
| New Enrollment Fee \$35.00 | ✓ | ✓ | | |

- **Safety Gear Fee:** funds from this fee will be used to update headlamps, reflectors, bear spray, first aid kit supplies, as well as fund safety related trainings for staff. This fee is due at the beginning of each session.
- **New Enrollment Fee:** this fee will be applied to any new enrollment. Enrollment will be considered new anytime there is gap in enrollment. If a participant is considered new in more than one program only \$35.00 is due, you will not be charged a fee for each program.

Payment Policy:

By signing the enrollment agreement form you agree to enroll your child(ren) for one session of a PMC Youth Program and to pay the rate for the entire session based on the rate chart for the session, even if your child is absent or you decide to reduce the number of days per week. You will be charged 50% of your child's remaining tuition for withdrawing your child(ren) prior to the end of the session. Payment is due by the 14th of the month and checks

can be made out to Petersburg Medical Center. Families with an outstanding balance at the end of the session will forfeit their priority enrollment slot until payment is made in full or a payment plan is established with the program administrator.

Financial Aid:

If your family is Alaska Native you may qualify for Tlingit and Haida Childcare Assistance, program staff are available to support your family through either of these processes.

PMC Youth Programs has a scholarship fund to help reduce financial barriers for participants. Please ask the Youth Program Coordinator for an application.

Chronic Absenteeism Policy: *policy approved and adopted by the Advisory Committee on 01.03.2024 and effective beginning Spring 2024.*

Purpose:

With consideration to the long waitlist for enrollment in the Kinder Skog program, the purpose of this policy is to ensure participants who are enrolled are utilizing their enrollment spot and families are communicating absences.

Policy:

Participants enrolled with Kinder Skog, or Forest Kindy, shall have an actual attendance of at least 75% per session. Participants not attending at least 75% will need to enter the waitlist process for the following session of Kinder Skog. Exceptions will be made for absences related to medical, emergency, planned vacations, or absences communicated via email at least 24 hours in advance.

YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Program staff will follow PMC policy for returning to work after an illness.
- Participants and staff will follow CDC guidance for contagious illnesses.
- **If your child has a fever, has vomited, or has had diarrhea or any contagious illness within the last twenty-four hours, please keep him/her/them at home.**
- Please notify the Youth Program Coordinator whenever your child has had a communicable disease (lice, scabies, etc) including symptoms consistent with Covid-19.
- You or your designated emergency contact will be notified immediately if your child becomes sick at a PMC Youth Program. In the event of injury or illness which appears to require immediate medical treatment, you will be notified, and an emergency vehicle will be called to assist or transport the child to the hospital. Please see below about our Incident Reporting.
- Students will be released only to those individuals who are named on the enrollment form. Exceptions must be requested in writing.
- No prescription medication will be administered at PMC Youth Programs without a medication waiver signed by the parent/guardian.
- If a child is too sick to play outside, attend school, or is experiencing symptoms consistent with Covid-19 he/she/they is too sick to attend to Youth Programs.
- There are no firearms in our facility.
- We will occasionally have a "Skoggy-Doggy", Skipper join for outside adventures. If a participant with a severe allergy enrolls, Skipper will remain at home. Skipper is a German Shepherd/husky mix who loves to play outside and thoroughly enjoys children. Parents/guardians can request, at any time, Skipper not be with the group while their child(ren) is in attendance and that request will be respected.
- Identifiable photos will not be shared on social media platforms without written consent.
- Mentors will always carry a full first aid kit, cell phone, drinking water, emergency contact information for each child, food, and have adult and child CPR and First Aid certification. **Mentors over the age of 18 will carry bear spray during spring, summer, and early fall.**
- Mentors carry two-way radios for quick communication between staff.
- If needed, there are qualified substitutes available who have completed the necessary orientation to become a Youth Programs substitute. If you are interested in joining the any of the Youth Programs substitute lists, please email kinderskog@pmc-health.org for more information.
- Parents/guardians are required to sign a waiver and release of liability form prior to their child attending PMC Youth Programs.

COMMITMENT TO YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY AND WELL-BEING:

PMC Youth Programs are committed to inspiring and teaching respect for the earth and all its creatures. This includes modeling and fostering respect for self and for others always. Cooperative activities are emphasized, and we guide children into co-creating adventures. If any hitting, grabbing, pushing, name calling, aggressiveness, or other demeaning behavior occur, one of our mentors/teachers will immediately move the child to a calm place where

their concerns can be heard one-on-one. Our goal is to empower children to learn to work with others while simultaneously fostering their autonomy. We will speak respectfully to your child and model appropriate responses to the range of your child's emotions. Please bring any concerns or comments your child reports to the attention of the **Youth Program Coordinator** so we can work as a team to support your child's concerns and feelings.

Behavior Guidance:

Mentors of PMC Youth Programs have a responsibility to guide, correct, and socialize children toward appropriate behaviors. Our program will utilize positive guidance to promote children's self-control, teach responsibility, and empower children to make thoughtful choices. Mentors will preserve the child's self-esteem and dignity. Children will not be subjected to insults or actions that belittle. Staff will be proactive in behavior management by setting clear rules/boundaries, engaging with children, building trust with children/families, expecting the best from all children, setting a good example, modeling conflict resolution and discussion of feelings, mentors will take action before situations become out of control, we will focus on desired behaviors, rather than the ones to be avoided, we will also be mindful of children's sensory needs and redirect those needs into appropriate manners when needed. If a participant is acting violently towards self or others, parents/guardians will be notified of the situation. If the situation becomes frequent behavior interventions will take place. Interventions may include more mentor time in proximity to participant, creating "when-then" sentences with the child, behavior prompting, and respectful redirection. If these behavior interventions do not guide the child towards more positive and acceptable behavior a more formal behavior plan will be established with the parent(s)/guardians. Staff view behavior as a means of communication, and we will work towards understanding and meeting the needs of all children. However, if a child is frequently putting self or others at risk of danger through violent physical or verbal acts a suspension from the program may be recommended by the Program Coordinator. If, upon return, the behavior continues despite positive guidance strategies, the Program Coordinator may ask for the child to be withdrawn from the program at no penalty to the family.

Injury and Incident Reporting

Occasionally bumps, bruises, falls, and other incidents occur while out exploring and playing. At least one staff member who is certified in First Aid/CPR will be always with the group to handle these situations. Our mentors will complete an incident report which parents/guardians can request a copy of. Depending on the severity of the injury or the situation a parent/guardian will be notified immediately. If deemed necessary by our first aid/CPR trained staff, emergency medical professionals will be called to assist/transport an individual. Examples of when an incident report would be used; rolled ankle, potentially dangerous behavior of participant (punching, hitting, etc), cuts, falls, and so on. **PMC Youth Program staff are also certified in Youth Mental Health First Aid, which allows us to better recognize and respond the signs and symptoms of a mental health challenge.**

Cold Weather Outdoor Play Policy

Primarily for Kinder Skog: Outdoor play is essential to children's health and well-being. Children need to run, climb, and play outdoors. The time children play each day is just as important to their learning as the time they spend in the classrooms. Families are expected to provide appropriate outdoor gear every day. During Kinder Skog, the children play and learn outside each day. We utilize weather guidelines to ensure that we have limited outdoor play during extreme weather. The following guidelines have been established for healthy outdoor play:

Cold Weather Guidelines

- Temperature/wind chills of 30°F or higher: regular outdoor play times are followed
- Temperature/wind chills between 13-30°F: indoor breaks will be offered
- Temperature/wind chills of 13°F or below: limited outdoor play time with indoor breaks offered.

It is important that children have winter coats, neck gaiters (scarves are prohibited), hats and gloves each day during the winter season. When there is snow is on the ground, we will make sure provided snow clothes are worn by children, such as snow pants, and boots.

Clothing Requirements

Please label all clothing- especially outerwear. PMC Youth Programs will not be responsible for loss or damage of personal belongings brought to the program. Our goal is for your child to be warm and dry so they can thoroughly enjoy the experience of playing in and exploring the natural environment in all weather conditions.

- **Boots:** You are required to send your child in waterproof boots and insulated waterproof boots when the weather demands. Bogs or other boots such as these are ideal.
- **Socks:** Wool or some type of thermal socks are best for our climate much of the time.
- **Hats/balaclavas:** A well-fitting wool hat or balaclava is essential for cold days.
- **Neck Gaiter:** A neck gaiter is preferable to a scarf for safety when playing and climbing actively outdoors. Please do not send your child with a scarf.
- **Hands:** Waterproof gloves or mittens are recommended, whether they are insulated or not, depending on the temperature.

- **Under Layers:** It is helpful to have a range of under layers to keep your child warm and comfortable in various temperatures. Base layer: wool is ideal.
- **Mid-layer:** fleece or wool
- **Outer layer:** this is the keep kids' dry layer.
Pants: Waterproof pants are a crucial layer and required for most days at Kinder Skog. Even if it's not raining, we are in the woods, muskeg, beaches, and the ground is cool and damp. In the winter months we encourage participants to wear water-proof snow pants OR wear snow pants/insulating pants as a mid-layer WITH rain pants as an outer layer.
Coat: Again, layers are important here. A fleece mid-layer will work in moderate and colder temperatures. A quality waterproof coat is essential for the outer layer, and one that has a cinching at the wrist is helpful for keeping water out.

Additional Suggestions

- Layers, layers, layers! This is the ideal way for your child to stay comfortable. Label all clothing and accessories. It is best with waterproof clothing not to over wash them. It greatly reduces the waterproof quality. We recommend wiping or hosing off dirty gear and only very occasionally washing raincoats and pants and never put into the dryer.
- It is recommended to bring, a full set of extra clothes at Kinder Skog in case a change of clothing is necessary.
- Boggs, Polarn O. Pyret, Columbia, Gage, Oakiwear, Outdoor Research, REI, Lands End, Gordini, and Smartwool are brands we recommend. Sign up with Polarn O. Pyret as a forest school to receive a discount and free shipping. You can also use code "kinderskog" at OakiWear to receive a discount on gear.

SNACKS AND WATER BOTTLES:

You must pack a snack and clean water bottle for your child(ren) each day. All snack bags and water bottles MUST be labeled with your child's name. Please pack healthy snacks that keep your child full and ready for adventure. Examples: fruit, veggies, granola bars, energy balls, fruit/veg pouch snacks, sandwiches, soup in a thermos, hard-boiled eggs. Please try to include protein, carbs, fruit, and vegetables with each snack. These kids play hard and need the nourishment.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Families should expect important information to be sent via email. Kinder Skog will also have monthly newsletter will be sent out to families. If you are not receiving emails, please check your spam/junk folder. More casual information will be shared on our Facebook page, but please check emails for the more critical information. We will utilize OneCallNow for emergent information.

Communication With Program Staff:

If you need to communicate with program staff, you are asked to email their professional email address. You may also call/text staff during the day, however out of respect for work/life balance we ask that you do not call or text prior to 7:30am or after 6:00pm unless it is an urgent matter. Email is always welcome. Kinder Skog has a public Facebook and Instagram page, it is appropriate to ask questions and make comments on those social media platforms, however discussions should remain civil and critical matters should be addressed through email or private conversations with program staff.

DROP-OFF & PICK-UP TIMES:

Please refer to the session enrollment agreement or camp enrollment form for drop-off and pick-up times. If you need to pick up your child(ren) before dismissal time you must text or call a mentor to find our location. If you happen to be running late for drop-off or pick-up, please email or call a staff member.

PARENT/GUARDIAN/VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION:

Parent/guardian participation and observation at PMC Youth Programs is encouraged, please contact the Youth Programming Coordinator to coordinate participation/observation. Parents/guardians are expected to sign a form at registration that states they have read and agree to the policies in this handbook.

Volunteers:

Volunteers will occasionally be utilized to help support enrichment programs. Volunteers will never be left alone with participants, responsible for participants, or counted towards staff to participant ratios.

FIELD TRIPS/TRANSPORTATION:

Parents/guardians will sign a permission slip for field trips at the beginning of the session. This will include only trips by foot within walking distance. Special permission slips will be sent home for other trips. If there is any transportation in a vehicle/boat, parents/guardians will be required to sign a transportation release form specific to the event. All transportation will be in good repair, safe, and smoke free. Children will not be permitted to ride in the front seat of vehicles. We will utilize safe procedures if/when transporting children including the usage of appropriate seat restraints or **Personal Floatation** Devices while on boat transportation.

ANIMALS ON THE PREMISES:

We will occasionally have a "Skoggy-Doggy", Skipper, join for outside adventures. If a participant with a severe allergy enrolls, Skipper will remain at home. Skipper is a German Shepherd/husky mix who loves to play outside and thoroughly enjoys children. Parents/guardians can request, at any time, Skipper not be with the group while their child(ren) is in attendance and that request will be respected.

POLICY CHANGES:

Any changes to Youth Programs policies will be provided to families in digital form, or hardcopy per request, and added to the Youth Programs Family Handbook. The Kinder Skog advisory committee will make every effort to have policy changes take effect at the beginning of a new session. Notice of changes will be given to families at least five days prior to changes taking effect. Changes to the mitigation plan will be immediate, however, we do encourage family feedback on those changes.

THANK YOU

Petersburg Medical Center's Youth Program team thanks you for trusting us with your children and allowing us to provide enriching, engaging and fun experiences for kids. We look forward to many adventures with kids and remind families if you ever have questions or comments you are welcome to email the Youth Program Coordinator at kholmund@pmc-health.org

