

# Windover

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The center has numerous buildings for a variety of art activities, like the Birch Tree Theater, one of the larger on the campus, which has theater seating and a stage, and murals on the walls both inside and out. The Art Barn, also known as a the Multi-Purpose Building, is next to the theater, hosting arts and crafts activities. The Pottery Studio contains kilns and tables for work, and the walls are splattered with clay and stuffed with pottery creations.

Situated behind both barns is the Dark Room, where the kids are able to develop their own photos. There are a variety of options when it comes to which camera to use. The camp just recently received a donation of a new Hasselblad 30C camera from photographer Peter Mallow – the camera of Mari and Isaac's dreams. There's also a big field with a view of mountains, and an above-ground pool to cool off on hot days.

There is bus transportation available for camp attendees from Bangor or Hampden. Once the children arrive, everyone meets in the Birch Tree Theater for a morning meeting, which is where the true magic of Windover begins. There are three boards spread across the wall of the barn, each representing the three periods of the day. Each attendee gets three cards with their name on them, which they place on each board to sign up for the periods.

"It's nice because kids want to have that choice. They want to have some say in what they will be doing," Abercrombie said. "This way they try new things. We work hard to have a good variety so there is ideally something for everyone."

Jacob McCormack of Orono attended the camp for three weeks this year. His favorite part is the digital art and design portion.

"Many people think video games are stupid, for children," Jacob said. "But there is really much more that goes into it."

Joanna Thyer's daughter Maggie, 11, is in her fourth year at Windover. They heard about the camp when

a flyer was sent home from school.

"The camp lets kids be kids," Joanna Thyer said. "The counselors don't hover. They allow the kids to be creative."

Mari Abercrombie could write a novel on the importance of art for children and society – it's her life's work, giving kids the creative outlet they don't seem to get elsewhere. She believes everything that is taught at Windover is influential and meaningful to the attendees, though in today's world of budget cuts, the chances for kids to exercise their creativity in school keep growing smaller.

"It makes me so upset. This is the meat of life. The sweetness of life. Look around – there probably isn't anything in your life that isn't affected by art," Abercrombie said. "My whole day is full of art. Whether it's gardening or cooking. I even try to do my laundry creatively. For me, it's hard to imagine people not having art in their lives."

Counselor-in-training Rose Cobo-Lewis agrees. The 14-year-old has been at Windover for three years and has seen the vast variety of what defines "art".

"A common misconception is that art is just painting," Cobo-Lewis said. "Art is a part of everything."

Isaac Fer believes the camp is more than just about art, however – it helps with both self-esteem and identity.

"There are so many people that young kids idolize, whether they are musicians or movie stars, and one of the programs I do with the kids involves digital music apps that make it easier for non-musicians to get engaged with music," Fer said. "That's one of the things I like the kids to see so that they know they aren't miles away from the people that they idolize."

Not only does Windover help boost self-esteem, but it gives the kids a sense of pride. They are able to create and put those creations on display. Every Friday afternoon Windover holds an art show that displays everything the attendees made during the course of the week. The most rewarding aspect of the job, for both Mari and Isaac, is seeing

ing the pride on the faces of the kids when they show the work they've done.

"We are living in a world where most things are already made for us. We are really losing touch with that sense of pride and ownership and self-esteem," Fer said. "I think it's really good for them to be able to say, 'I did this', and then connect that to the idea that maybe they can do whatever they set their mind to."

Lindsay Hartwell, an art teacher at Glenburn Elementary School, knows how important art is in a child's life.

"Art provides an opportunity for children to create and make something tangible," Hartwell said. "It builds community through teamwork and working together through collaboration. It gives students practice in problem solving and meeting new challenges... [Windover] gives the kids a great opportunity to get experiences outside of school in the summer. I think it's great for them to collaborate and work with kids from other schools."

Art in public schools is in trouble, however, with tighter budgets and the idea that art is an "extra" activity – not a necessity like math or science.

"We need to make sure the arts have a permanent, safe and supported place in the curriculum across the state of Maine so these programs aren't threatened to be cut or reduced to part time," Hartwell said. "Kids need to have access to the arts as often as possible. Even now, kids probably get art once a week... The threat of having even that being reduced is really disheartening for art educators."

Hartwell believes that since the impact of the arts is not quantifiable like math and science, it often gets marginalized in curriculums.

"It's hard to promote the notion that art education is really important and enhances learning in all subject areas because it is not something that is directly measurable in standardized testing," she said. "A lot of times we don't have that data to support how important it is. So I think schools



KATE BERRY/THE WEEKLY

Mari Abercrombie leads a class this summer at the Windover Arts Center in Newburgh.

and teachers need to do a better job of making the importance of it known."

Isaac Fer wants to expand classes to include more about nature and agriculture.

"I'd love to have an agricultural portion. It would be cool for the kids to grow and eat things," Fer said. "There is

that sense of pride when you grow something and eat it."

Mari Abercrombie has high hopes for art in the future in society. Bright individuals and creative minds are everywhere. She sees smart kids on a weekly basis at the camp.

"My real dream is to have a Windover in every town like

you can find a McDonald's," Abercrombie said. "Kids could go there and create, and be kids, be messy and self-expressed... I hope Windover will be a major part in carrying on the arts for everybody."

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