

Silver threads template for submitting article to Enterprise June 18, 2012

Silver Threads

A column created especially for people spending their golden years in Falmouth, written by these same senior citizens.

“ You Are My Sunshine. . .”

By Mary Fran Buckley

“If I’d known how much fun it is to be a grandparent, I would have done it long ago.” How true! And now that it’s summer, we can expect visits from these wonderful persons. What better place to visit than the Cape, with its beautiful, numerous beaches ... as long as the sun shines. But what to do on rainy days, or when a day at the beach becomes routine? Fortunately, there are many opportunities—some in Falmouth, others farther afield.

Starting with the beach, there are things to do beyond swimming, sunbathing and building sand castles. The Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute has a Beachcomber’s Companion to aid you in your exploration of the Cape beaches. This kit contains 54 field guide cards featuring original illustrations of marine invertebrates, a wax pencil for the animal checklist, and a mesh bag for collecting specimens. It is available at Eight Cousins Bookstore for \$19.95.

Away from the beach, there are interesting ponds and marshland to explore. To assist you in this endeavor, The 300 Committee offers a “Passport to Falmouth’s Conservation Lands,” a guide to five conservation areas with descriptions of what can be found in each. After you visit the sites, take the booklet to one of the Falmouth libraries, The 300 Committee, or Eight Cousins Bookstore for a stamp. When completed, you will receive an award from The 300 Committee. Passports are free of charge and available at the three sites listed above.

Beginning at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 11, and running through August, a guide from The 300 Committee will lead a walk to the Punch Bowl in Beebe Woods. A new trail allows walkers to circle the entire pond; the total distance is less than a mile of generally easy walking with a few small but steep hills. The Committee also has three maps—a town-wide map of all conservation and recreation land in Falmouth, the larger format Beebe Woods/Peterson Farm map, and the Moraine Trail map—available at their headquarters (157 Locust Street). In addition, there are 24 individual trail maps that can be downloaded from their Web site. For more information, go to www.300committee.org, or contact them by phone (508-540-0876).

Continuing beyond the beach, Coonamessett Farm in East Falmouth is a wonderful spot, even on a rainy day. Whether picking organic vegetables and fruit, collecting eggs in the henhouse, or visiting the animals, the farm offers almost a full day’s worth of activities. Coonamessett Farm also has a summer-long program, Little Sprouts, for ages 4 through 10, which focuses on planting, maintaining and harvesting in addition to farm-related arts and crafts, nature walks and other farm activities. Held in partnership with the Cape Cod Children’s Museum, the classes meet once a week for 90 minutes; there is a charge for this camp. Contact Coonamessett Farm, either online (www.coonamessettfarm.com) or by phone (508-563-2560) for a full description of this program.

The Cape Cod Children's Museum in Mashpee is another rainy-day destination. In fact, the museum was named the 2011 Gold Winner for the Best Rainy Day Activity and Kids Activity on the Upper Cape. It is filled with hands-on activities and special exhibits, as well as the StarLab planetarium—a fun way to learn about the stars—for children 5 years and older. Contact the museum for scheduled shows (508-539-8788). There are also special events and classes, most of which are held during the school year. For directions and additional information, check out their Web site, www.capecodchildrensmuseum.org.

Back in Falmouth, The Falmouth Historical Society, in addition to lectures for adults, offers family programs for all ages. They include Big Ryan's Tall Tales, on Friday July 13, a 100th anniversary celebration for the Oreo cookie on Saturday July 14, the Teddy Bear Picnic and Tea, where you build your own bear, on Friday, July 27, and a day of colonial games on Friday, August 11. All are held at the Museums on the Green on Palmer Avenue, across from the village green. Additional information can be found at www.falmouthhistoricalsociety.org or by calling the museum, 508-548-4857.

Highfield Hall in Falmouth has launched a series of programs for children: Art Explorations, a program for children with special needs, and Summer Discovery Days. Family Nights Out, Wednesday evenings July 18 through August 15, from 5:00–7:00 p.m., offers games on the lawns, craft activities, and opportunities to explore Beebe Woods. Then, at 6:00 p.m., there will be “first-rate” family entertainment, starting with the Green Apple Kids Band on July 18. There is more information on their Web site, www.highfieldhall.org.

The Cape Cod Conservatory of Music and Arts has one- and two-week long programs for all ages. Nature crafts and fairy houses, a puppet workshop, Kids Clay, and Introduction to Ceramics are just a few of the arts offerings. For music, there is private instruction and ensemble opportunities as well as the Summer Sounds Music Program for grades 6–12 and Summer Sounds Junior for ages 8–11. Contact the Conservatory at 508-540-0611 for more information.

Switching back to the coast, one spot you won't want to overlook is Waquoit Bay. The Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve offers a number of programs for children, including Evenings on the Bluff (a series of educational entertainment programs for the whole family); Creature Feature (a program of hands-on discovery of estuarine animals); Discovery Days (Visitor Center open house with activities); field walks at South Cape Beach and Washburn Island; Junior Ranger Program for 8–12-year olds; and a Story Time for those under age 8. The Waquoit Bay Science School offers a variety of week-long “educational experiences that encourage curiosity in science and the natural world.” There are programs for every age group, but contact them soon as classes fill up early. Call the Reserve directly for information on dates and times (508-457-0495) or go to their Web site, www.waquoitbayreserve.org.

The Children's School of Science, in Woods Hole, has been extremely popular for generations—so popular, it's probably too late now to apply. Courses run for three or six weeks and meet five days a week. Information on courses can be found on their Web site www.childrenschoolofscience.org. Perhaps it's not too early to think about next summer...

Farther afield, in Sandwich, is the beautiful Heritage Museums and Gardens. The grounds are a

delight to explore, the Automobile Museum features luxury and classic cars, the carousel with antique horses is a highlight of any visit, and the Magnolia Cafe is perfect for lunch and light snacks. In addition, children will want to explore Hidden Hollow where they can climb stepping stumps, navigate log balance beams, construct forts, create nature-inspired art, build with blocks, experiment with water and make music. Look for Owl Academy programs that include Music Makers, Story Time, Nature Detectives and Outdoor Discoveries. Summer Museum Adventures is a program that runs two days a week from mid-July until mid-August, with a full-day or half-day option. There is a fee for this program.

Friday, June 29, is Free Fun Friday at Heritage; all other days there is an entrance fee. Each Friday from July 6–August 10, 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m., is Family Fun Friday, with special programming and performances. There is no additional admission fee for these Friday activities, as well as Owl Academy. And while you're visiting, don't miss the Norman Rockwell exhibition that will run until September 3. For more information and a calendar of events, go to the Web site, www.heritagemuseumsandgardens.org, or contact Heritage by phone (508-888-3300).

Don't forget to check with your local library for information on story times and other summer activities. Eight Cousins Bookstore also has a weekly Story Time, Tuesday mornings at 10:30, mostly for children ages 3–6.

Undoubtedly there are numerous other opportunities for entertaining your grandchildren. We hope this gives you an idea of what is available. As with adults, there is no dearth of activities in Falmouth. Isn't Falmouth Nice!

Neighborhood Falmouth is a nonprofit, membership organization, operating since 2009 to help Falmouth seniors live safely and comfortably in their own homes. For more information on joining, volunteering, and donating, call 508-564-7543; or visit www.neighborhoodfalmouth.org.