

City of Columbia Providing Opportunities for Our Youth to Stay Positively Engaged

The City of Columbia offers a variety of programs and activities designed to keep youth engaged, active and connected throughout the year. These opportunities provide safe environments that encourage personal growth, leadership development, academic enrichment, recreation and positive community involvement.

Parks & Recreation Programs and Activities

City of Columbia Summer Camp (Ages 5-15)

The City expanded its traditional summer camp age range to better serve teens and provide more opportunities for youth to remain engaged during the summer months. Camp participants enjoy supervised recreation, educational activities, arts and crafts, social development opportunities and field trips. The program is designed to provide a safe environment that promotes personal growth, friendship, learning and healthy lifestyles



Teen Summer Camp (Ages 13-17)

This camp is specifically designed for teenagers and focuses on leadership development, exposure to higher education opportunities and personal enrichment. Through college visits, local excursions and interactions with community leaders and mentors, participants are encouraged to explore future career and educational pathways while building confidence and life skills.

City of Columbia Golf Camp (Ages 8-16)

Golf Camp introduces youth to the fundamentals of golf while teaching sportsmanship, discipline, etiquette and course management. The program aims to build character, improve athletic skills and expose participants to a lifelong recreational activity.

Primetime in the Park Teen Events (Ages 13-17)

Primetime in the Park provides free evening activities designed to offer teens safe and engaging recreational alternatives during the summer months. Events such as the Silent But Lit Teen Disco Party and Hoops After Dark create opportunities for social interaction, physical activity and positive community engagement in a supervised environment.

Summer Kayak Camps (Ages 13-16)

These immersive outdoor camps introduce participants to kayaking while exploring the Columbia Canal, area rivers, Congaree National Park and Lake Murray. The program encourages environmental awareness, teamwork, outdoor recreation skills and a greater appreciation for Columbia's natural resources.

Summer Youth Basketball League (Ages 8-18)

The Summer Youth Basketball League provides structured athletic competition that promotes teamwork, discipline, physical fitness and sportsmanship. The program helps youth stay active during the summer while developing leadership skills and positive peer relationships.

Columbia Police Department Police Athletic League (PAL) and Youth Engagement Programs

The Columbia Police Department's Police Athletic League (PAL) and Youth Engagement initiatives are designed to strengthen relationships between youth, families and law enforcement while providing positive opportunities for personal development, mentorship and community involvement.

Friday Connections

Friday Connections creates positive interactions between School Resource Officers and students in elementary and middle schools. The program is intended to build trust, foster positive relationships and provide encouragement that helps students feel supported both inside and outside the classroom.

PAL Parent and Community Enrichment Nights

These educational events provide parents, guardians and community members with information and resources related to youth wellness and safety. Topics include mental health, substance misuse prevention, school safety, firearm safety, self-defense and healthy living. The program aims to strengthen families and equip adults with tools to better support young people.

PAL Afterschool and Summer Activities

PAL offers structured recreational and educational opportunities that keep youth engaged in positive activities outside of school hours. These programs focus on character development, mentorship, leadership and building strong community connections.

Summer Block Parties

Summer Block Parties bring together youth, families, community organizations and public safety personnel through fun, family-friendly activities. These events are designed to strengthen neighborhood relationships, foster community pride and create positive interactions between residents and law enforcement.

Young Justice Ambassadors Program

This leadership-focused initiative provides teens with opportunities to develop communication, civic engagement and decision-making skills. Participants are encouraged to become positive role models and active contributors within their communities.

Teen Glow Party

Hosted in partnership with community organizations, the Teen Glow Party provides a safe and engaging environment for local teens while incorporating educational sessions focused on teamwork, leadership, substance use prevention and bystander intervention. The event promotes healthy decision-making and positive peer engagement.

BRIDGE Program

The BRIDGE Program helps families connect with resources and services when children or teens are experiencing behavioral, educational or personal challenges. Through counseling, mentoring, educational support and family-focused services, the program seeks to provide early intervention and support that leads to positive outcomes for youth and families.



Youth Workforce Development Opportunities

The City of Columbia is committed to helping young people gain valuable workplace experience, develop professional skills and explore future career opportunities through a variety of internship and employment programs.

For Summer 2026, the City is hosting 103 interns across multiple departments and divisions, including:

- 21 high school interns from Richland One and Richland Two School Districts
- 34 college interns serving throughout City government
- 48 youth participants working through the Columbia Urban League's workforce development and career readiness programs

These opportunities provide hands-on experience in local government, expose students to a variety of career pathways and help prepare the next generation of leaders through mentorship, professional development and real-world work experience.



Working Together for Our Youth

Supporting Columbia's youth takes a community-wide effort. Each year, the City of Columbia Public Relations, Media & Marketing Department partners with Parks and Recreation and numerous community organizations to develop and distribute the Youth Services Guide, connecting families with programs, camps, educational opportunities and support services available throughout the Midlands. These partnerships demonstrate that it truly takes a village to support, mentor and invest in the next generation.

The City extends its appreciation to the organizations that contribute to this resource and help create positive opportunities for young people, including: 1st Source Defense, Be Great Clubs, Club Beyond, Columbia Museum, Columbia Urban League SC, Deitra, EdVenture, Harriet Hancock Center, IT-oLogy, Lexington School District Two, Mitchell Bootcamp, North Columbia Community Enrichment Foundation, Press 2 Success, Puretone Academy, Rebirth Enterprise, Sandy, SC FWYC, South Carolina State Museum, SC United FC, SC YAP, Serve & Connect, Set in Stone Sustainability Farm, United Way, University of South Carolina Bands and WOW PAC.

The Youth Services Guide is available online through the City of Columbia homepage and Parks and Recreation website. Printed copies are also available at Parks and Recreation community centers and have been distributed at neighborhood meetings and community events throughout the summer months.

Together, We Are Columbia.

2026 Youth Services Guide

Your Guide to Summer Camps, Events, & Programs!



Scan the QR Code to access the guide.



(P) 803-545-3020
PIO@COLUMBIASC.GOV
WWW.COLUMBIASC.GOV



@Cityofcolumbiascgv



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