

## Hot fun in the summertime

A highlight of every summer at Fort Hays State University is the wide range of exciting experiential learning programs we offer elementary, middle, and high school students. Our team does an amazing job bringing young folks to campus for a myriad of fun, friendship, and growth. Here are just a couple of recaps of a very full summer schedule.

I absolutely love the variety and uniqueness of our Sternberg Science Camps! We offer elementary school camps (6-10 years old) with a focus on our museum and another specifically on dinosaurs, middle school camps (11-13 years old) including camping trips, and high school trips (ages 14-18).

This year we offered three thirteen-day high school field programs, including field paleontology, field herpetology, the volcanic history of Oregon, vertebrate anatomy, fossil preparation, and a California zooquarium adventure.

The staff at the Sternberg Museum know that people of all ages love the freedom of the great outdoors, so they successfully ran two parallel field paleontology high school camps. The programs drew 17 students, and with six camp staffers, these became our largest in-person camp operations since before COVID.

Student campers came from 12 states, led by New York with three. Students were delighted with the rich geologic landscape, an abundance of fossil shark teeth, fossil fish bones, and the ubiquitous giant clams that once covered the bottom of the Cretaceous Western Interior Seaway.

Staff this year includes Teaching Assistant Kathryn Gatlin, who began with us as a camper in 2015. According to Sternberg's outstanding camps director, David Levering, Kathryn has been crucial in our pre-camp prep and in-the-field execution of programs this year.

Prior to camp, she was one of two staff who volunteered to participate in an intensive 80-hour Wilderness First Responder (WFR) certification course through the National Outdoor Leadership School, giving her a certification one rank below a Wilderness EMT. Kathryn is a true powerhouse of a young scholar and will be starting her undergraduate at FHSU this fall as a freshman double majoring in Geology and Biology.

Thanks to the intrepid Dr. Laura Wilson, multiple fossil sites were visited or revisited this summer. Much to our camper's delight, Dr. Wilson was also able to join our high school field paleontology campers for a day of fossil hunting on private land not normally accessible to fossil hunters.

There is so much more to share about Sternberg camps (lots of great information on our website), but I also want to mention the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the High Plains Music camp and one of many very successful athletic camps.

The first High Plains Music Camp was organized by FHSU Professor Hal Palmer 75 years ago and has been held every summer since. It continues to be one of the most comprehensive summer camps in the state and has garnered a reputation as one of the top summer camps in our region.

This year's High Plains Music Camp was held July 10-16, 2022. More than 200 middle and high school-aged singers, actors, and instrumentalists spent the week in rehearsals led by FHSU Music and Theater faculty, alumni, and invited guest teachers from around the state.

Daily evening concerts included the Faculty Recital, High School Honors Recital, Faculty Band, Jazz Ensembles, Alternative Strings, and Theater Scenes from Annie Get Your Gun. The featured soloist with both the Faculty Band and Jazz Ensemble was the world-renowned trumpet soloist Allen Vizzutti.

Our Tiger Volleyball Camps were also very popular this year. The youth volleyball camp in June attracted 60 campers. This camp ended up being so popular Tiger Volleyball Coach Jessica Wood-Atkins added a second session at the end of July.

Along with learning the basics of volleyball, campers also enjoyed games, a pool party, and pictures with our inflatable Tiger Head. All Skills I Camp had 70 high school and middle school athletes from Kansas, Colorado, and Nebraska.

Campers enjoyed sharpening their volleyball skills while getting feedback from our current athletes. They also got to experience what it is like to live in the residence halls for a night of games, snacks, and stories. Camps continued throughout the summer. At the end of July, our outstanding staff worked with our incoming freshman class as well as some great recruits from the 2023 and 2024 classes.

The FHSU Volleyball coaching staff was also busy with camps off campus as well. We ran four local Tiger satellite volleyball camps at Quinter, Hoisington, Ulysses, and Decatur High Schools. Our staff also traveled to two camps in Colorado at Byers High School and Limon High school. All these camps hosted both high school and middle school campers.

Next up, the Tiger Volleyball team will kick off the 2022 season at the Oklahoma City Tournament on August 26. Don't miss the 2022 home opener on Friday, September 16, at 6 p.m. in Gross Memorial Coliseum.

It's been a blistering hot summer, but the heat is not the only memory those who chose to spend part of their summer at FHSU will take home. Hundreds of student campers took advantage of unique opportunities to pursue their intellectual, creative, or athletic passion, meet new friends, and begin or renew relationships with the caring and compassionate people who make FHSU special.

It's almost August, and in less than 30 days, the new academic year will begin at FHSU. Many of the new students we will welcome this fall will already know us pretty well from their time as summer campers.