



Graham Paine/Metroland

Anna Drummond, owner Fallbrook Trail Ranch, feels more prepared for the summer camp season ahead.

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fully) in-person programming.

"If there's a need in certain locations to do virtual, we will do virtual and other locations that are open will be open in person," explained artistic director Lily Small.

The key, said Small, is the ability to be flexible under constantly-changing restrictions.

"We are prepared either way for in-person or virtual, and we may do a combination of both."

Milton's Create U is set to offer a backyard camp experience for a second straight year.

Counsellors deliver the feel of an on-site camp to families, complete with materials and creative activities to groups of up to six in their own backyard.

"We want to be flexible and give all children the opportunity to participate in camp," said director Cheryl Vrkljan.

The idea for the backyard camp experience predates the pandemic; however, Vrkljan said the need to adapt to COVID pushed the concept forward.

If camps can operate in person, the service will still be offered again this year, in addition to the traditional camp. Beyond changes in delivery, another big change for camps is in the price.

With fewer expenses, many camps can offer a lower fee for their virtual sessions, while in-person camp prices have risen in some cases to allow for the purchase of personal protective equipment and sanitation materials.

The hope for most camp organizers is that they'll be able to run safely this summer and provide children with as close to normal an experience as possible.

"It is so hugely important that these children get to go to camp this summer because their mental health has really been hit,"

said Drummond.

Camp owners aren't the only ones who hope in-person camps run this year.

Mother Julie Cole sees camp as an important part of children's development.

"I know with my children, they really missed it (camp last year). It certainly took a toll on their mental health, and I think it took a toll on their physical health too."

*STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With Halton still under strict pandemic restrictions, we wanted to explore how summer camp operators are preparing for the season ahead and how families can expect to terms of programming.*

— Michael Elioff is a placement student from Fanshawe College.



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