



GIRLS EMPOWERED BY MOUNTAIN SHEPHERD GEMS 1 Shining Bright

CONFIDENCE.
COURAGE.
COMPASSION.



GEMS are Girls Empowered through exploration of seven survival priorities: positive mental attitude, first aid, shelter, fire, signaling, water, and food. During a five-day overnight experience, campers learn the practical skills associated with each priority. Girls also discover the parallels between each survival priority and their lives in the "front country." GEMS practice using the seven survival priorities as a framework for anticipating and overcoming life's challenges. Girls investigate their own personalities and communication styles in new ways, and are physically challenged during hiking, camping, and more! After five days, GEMS leave with courage, confidence, and compassion, knowing how to stay true to themselves in the face of challenges.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Frequently Asked Questions

What experience do I need to attend GEMS camp? Outdoor experience levels do not matter. Campers with no experience, weekend day-hikers, and seasoned wilderness warriors are all welcome to partake in the Girls Empowered experience. No matter what experience you arrive with, we hope each girl leaves feeling empowered by the benefits of outdoor learning.

Is GEMS held outside? Yes! Mountain Shepherd is on a gorgeous 100 acre property bordering the Jefferson National Forest. During GEMS 1: Shining Bright, many activities will be set up under parachute canopies. GEMS 2, GEMS 3, and GEMS: Polishing Up campers will spend several days of their session in other outdoor settings while backpacking, canoeing, caving, and rock climbing (see course descriptions for more information). In all sessions, campers should plan to spend the majority of the day outside - rain or shine. We teach campers how to dress appropriately for the weather (see packing list for specifics).

What is the age requirement for camp? This program is designed for girls entering grades 6 and up. Each session is open to mixed age groups for a unique peer-to-peer experience. For example, GEMS 1 sessions are ideal for girls entering grades 6-8, while GEMS 2 and GEMS 3 sessions may each have a combined group of girls entering grades 7 and up.

Should campers bring a friend to camp? Campers are sure to leave GEMS with new friends! During the school year, many of our campers write letters to each other, set up group messages or video calls, and look forward to being reunited with their fellow GEMS. Of course, if you know a fellow girl in middle school or high school who might like GEMS, have her sign up, too!

Do I sleep under the stars? Depending on your comfort zone and the level of GEMS camp you are in, you may have that opportunity! All GEMS campers are housed in Mountain Shepherd's cozy bunk rooms with private bathrooms attached. During GEMS 1, there are opportunities to camp together in tents on the property for campers who are comfortable doing so. During GEMS 2, GEMS 3, and GEMS: Polishing Up, we will camp together in tents on our backpacking or canoeing expeditions.

Do I get to eat bugs? You will learn which bugs are edible and how to find them. Eating them is optional!

What else will I eat while at camp? Breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks are provided daily. Campers enjoy delicious, balanced home-cooked meals, and we can accommodate for allergies and dietary restrictions as needed. We prefer that campers do not keep their own food in bunkrooms.

What more can you tell me about my daughter's safety? The adult to camper ratio is 3:12 or better depending on enrollment. Campers and adults move together between activities and during upper-level expeditions. There will be a female adult with your daughter throughout the day and quickly accessible at night. All staff are Wilderness First Aid or Wilderness First Responder trained. Moreover, Mountain Shepherd prohibits the possession and use of weapons, firearms, and drugs.

When does camp start and end? Each session begins on a Monday morning at 9:00am and wraps up on a Friday afternoon by 4:00pm. To accommodate for traveling and other schedule conflicts, campers are welcome to arrive at Mountain Shepherd on Sunday afternoon or evening before their session begins, for an additional fee. Airport pick-up and drop-off from Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport (ROA) is also available with prior notice.

What is the weather like? Local weather is hard to predict. We suggest you watch the forecast for zip code 24070, and bring along clothing for hot, sunny afternoons, chilly evenings, and rainy days. Our packing list can help!

Do I need to buy a lot of gear? Not at all! The most necessary items are comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing and a pair of sturdy sneakers, walking/hiking shoes, or hiking boots. Closed-toe shoes are required; no flip flops, sandals, or other open-toe shoes. To avoid blisters and other injuries, we don't recommend campers bring brand-new shoes or boots to wear during camp. Our packing list specifies required items and offers some suggestions for optional items. We provide basic toiletries, towels and linens, and all outdoor equipment (please review the Equipment and Property Care policy regarding all supplied outdoor equipment).

What should campers leave at home? We recommend leaving all electronics at home to enhance the outdoor experience! Cell phones are allowed for contact with parents/guardians, but will be stored in a safe place accessible by staff. Only Verizon-connected cell phones will operate at Mountain Shepherd. Campers will be given plenty of opportunities to call home via personal cell phone or landline. Staff will update families with plenty of photos!

Equipment and Property Care

Campers are responsible for the equipment issued to them and should care for it like their own. Equipment is expected to be returned in the same condition in which it was issued. Campers should be proactive about contacting staff to fix damaged equipment. Issued equipment varies depending on the GEMS level, but may include: backpacks, tents, knives, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, camping stoves, flashlights or headlamps, first aid kits, and other gear provided by Hollins University Outdoor Program (HOP) or Mountain Shepherd.

Campers are expected to respect Mountain Shepherd property, indoors and outdoors. Bunks and bathrooms should be kept tidy, trash should be put in garbage cans, and gear should be stored properly. While outdoors away from Mountain Shepherd, campers and staff will practice Leave No Trace ethics.

PACKING LIST

Provided by Mountain Shepherd:

- Shampoo, conditioner, body wash
- Towels, washcloths, sheets, blankets, pillows
- Sunscreen, insect repellent
- Feminine hygiene products (limited supply for "just in case")
- Basic over-the-counter medications & first aid products
- Backpacks (multi-day and daypacks)
- Sleeping bags, sleeping pads
- Tents, hammocks
- Flashlights, headlamps
- Camp field journals
- A growing GEMS library of age-appropriate books to borrow!
- All other necessary outdoor equipment for program
- Yummy meals, snacks, and drinks
- Educational fun and adventures!

Required Items for Campers to Bring:

- 5 pairs of comfortable, outdoor-appropriate shorts (not too short, not too tight)
- 5 short-sleeved t-shirts (non-cotton, quick-dry fabric is ideal for outdoors)
- 1-2 long-sleeved t-shirts
- 1-2 pairs of jeans or long pants
- 1 sweatshirt, light sweater, or fleece jacket
- 7 pairs of underwear (5 days + extra)
- 2-3 sports bras, if needed
- 7 pairs of socks (5 days + extra) wool is best for hiking
- 2 sets of pajamas - 1 lightweight set, 1 warmer set.
- Rain jacket with taped seams - "Waterproof"
- 1-2 pairs of comfortable, broken-in, closed-toe shoes
- No sandals or flip flops; lace-up athletic sneakers or hiking boots are preferred over shoes like Vans, Keds, Converse, Toms, and other slip-ons.
- 2 pairs of appropriate shoes is ideal in case one pair needs to dry out.
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Hairbrush and hair accessories as needed
- Feminine hygiene products, if necessary (we keep an emergency supply)
- Deodorant, if necessary
- Eyeglasses and/or contact lenses, contact lens solution
- Refillable water bottle (32 oz. is ideal)
- Prescription medications in original container with dosage information
- An open mind, positive attitude, and sense of adventure!

Optional/Suggested Items (Remember: You only need enough for 5 days!):

- Any personal toiletries, sunscreen, insect repellent (especially if you have sensitivities to general products)
- Sunglasses, sun hat or baseball cap
- Flip-flops for use as shower shoes only
- Swimsuit
- Extra pair of eyeglasses and/or contact lenses
- Bag for dirty laundry
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Disposable camera or basic point-and-shoot camera
- Books, magazines, small crafts, instruments, coloring books, puzzles, card games - bring things to share with the group!
- Stuffed animal or other comfort item such as photos from home
- Cell phone - can be brought but will be stored by staff in safe space and given to campers for plenty of opportunities to call parents



GIRLS EMPOWERED AT MOUNTAIN SHEPHERD (GEMS)

DIRECTIONS

Please keep a copy of the directions with you when you travel. Technology does not serve our area well and often sends drivers the long way, the wrong way, or to a completely different location. If your schedule allows, travel during daylight hours. The views are spectacular!

From the North: Interstate 81 South towards Roanoke, Va. Take Exit 141. Take a left at the stop light. The second light is Route 311. You'll see the Orange Market on the left. A BP and Subway on the right. Take a right. Follow Route 311 for 12 miles to a left on Route 621/Upper Craigs Creek Road. Follow Route 621 for 9.3 miles. Set your odometer, as it is a long and winding 9.3 miles to our sign on the right. Our property is lined with a brown wooden fence. Take the right on Hemlock Ridge Lane and stay straight through the red gates. Get a bit of momentum heading up the hill. Parking area is at the bottom of the circle driveway.

From the South: Interstate 81 North towards Christiansburg/Blacksburg, Va. Take Exit 118B Us-11/US 460 towards Blacksburg. Follow US 460 approximately 15.8 miles to a right on Route 621/Craigs Creek Road. Watch for a brown Jefferson National Forest sign on the right. The right turn on Route 621 is just past that sign. Follow Rt. 621 for 11.9 miles to our sign on the left. Just before the turn on Hemlock Ridge Lane you will pass a white church on the left and a subdivision, Foxfire, on the right. Our sign is tilted a bit in the other direction. Our property is lined with a brown wooden fence. Take the left on Hemlock Ridge Lane and stay straight through the red gates. Get a bit of momentum heading up the hill. Parking area is at the bottom of the circle driveway.

From the West: Take 460 East to a left on Route 621. (If your GPS directs you to turn on Route 42, avoid it. You will end up on dirt road. Stay on 460 until you reach Route 621!) Watch for a brown Jefferson National Forest sign and a sign for Pandapas Pond on the right. The left turn on Route 621 is just past that sign. Follow Rt. 621 for 11.9 miles to our sign on the left. Just before the turn on Hemlock Ridge Lane you will pass a white church on the left and a subdivision, Foxfire, on the right. Our sign is tilted a bit in the other direction. Our property is lined with a brown wooden fence. Take the left on Hemlock Ridge Lane and stay straight through the red gates. Get a bit of momentum heading up the hill. Parking area is at the bottom of the circle driveway.

From the East: Travel to Interstate 81 and follow directions above from the north or south.



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