



Central Alabama Marines-Council  
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# The Situation Report: Semper Fi Summer Adventures

Issue 2 | July 11, 2025



*BondFire Ranch Founder & President, Brian Eddy, gives opening remarks to Team United and their parents during our observation day.*

## Week 2: Staying Rooted in Our Purpose

As we wrapped up the second week of camp, the energy and engagement from our campers have only continued to grow. At the heart of everything we do are our three guiding objectives: **creating community connections, offering growth opportunities, and developing quality citizens.**

This week's experiences perfectly reflected these pillars—from bonding with animals and learning the importance of responsibility, to competing with grace and exploring new academic and civic knowledge. Each activity was thoughtfully designed to help campers expand their horizons, build strong character, and connect more deeply to the world around them.

Whether on the field, in the classroom, or competing with drones, our campers are rising to each challenge with excitement, curiosity, and confidence.



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## Horsemanship with Heart: BondFire Ranch Visits Camp

We kicked off the week with an unforgettable visit from BondFire Ranch, who brought horsemanship right to our campers. Their arrival was met with curiosity and excitement—especially when campers met Brave (Black), Beautiful (White), and Hannah (Brown & White), three stunning horses who quickly became the stars of the week.

Through two days of hands-on instruction, campers learned the basics of horse care: grooming, tacking, basic riding principles, and most importantly, horse behavior. But the lessons went far beyond the physical—children also explored the emotional intelligence, communication, and bond-building that comes from working with horses. For many, this was their first up-close experience with horses, and the smiles said it all.

One camper shared, “I have never been able to get that close to a horse, and I loved being able to brush Brave.” These unique interactions taught more than just horsemanship—they instilled safety and confidence in action.





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## **A Symphony of Sound: Mr. McKenzie's Musical Discovery Lab**

Midweek, the incredibly talented Mr. McKenzie, a multi-instrumentalist and aspiring music educator, transformed our camp into a musical exploration zone. In a dazzling demo, he introduced over ten different instruments, from brass, woodwinds, and percussion instruments.

Campers were captivated as he played brief solos, explained how sounds are created, and demonstrated rhythm, pitch, and harmony. For students who showed special interest or talent, Mr. McKenzie offered one-on-one mini lessons, planting seeds for a potential lifelong love of music.

One student proudly said, "I didn't think I could play an instrument, but I thought it was very cool to play the euphonium with Mr. McKenzie!" The joy of discovery was everywhere, and our campers walked away with not just new knowledge but the spark of artistic self-expression.



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## High-Tech Learning and Friendly Competition: Drones Take Flight

The skies were busy this week as Mr. Slade Bridges from Southern Company visited to discuss drone training and conducted a demonstration. This demonstration built on last week's discussion given by Mr. Aaron Miller on the commercial application of drones and understanding of modern technology.

This week, in partnership with Amerson Events, we built an exciting drone competition for each learning cohort! Teammates competed against one another, demonstrating their skills in flight control, obstacle navigation, and landing accuracy—proficiency they developed during their training sessions last week. After some intense and skillful rounds, three standout competitors emerged victorious. Congratulations to our winners.

One camper beamed, "I have never flown a drone before, but I built confidence during the competition...the first thing I do when I go home now is fly my drone!"



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## Citizenship in Action: American Village's Civics Immersion Classes

In collaboration with the American Village Citizenship Trust, we had the pleasure of welcoming educators from their Teacher Advisory Board, who led engaging and impactful sessions in civics and American history. Through storytelling, scavenger hunts, cipher codes, historical reenactments, and small-group simulations, they brought our nation's founding ideals to life. Campers explored important themes such as liberty, representation, the importance of voting, civic responsibility, and leadership—making meaningful connections between the past and their roles as engaged citizens.

As one camper shared: "I have visited American Village during the school year, but I was able to learn more about George Washington and his contributions to our country during camp."

Thank you to Mrs. Kelly Sorrell and Mrs. Savannah Fisher for spending time with our campers this week. We truly appreciate the care, insight, and enthusiasm you brought to our camp!





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## Beating the Heat: Outdoor Athletics & Summer Treats

Albeit the weather is getting warmer as we move deeper into the summer months, we remain committed to rotating responsibly through athletic and competitive activities. These physical sessions offer campers a meaningful break from classroom learning and provide opportunities to build teamwork, communication, and resiliency through play.

Campers have enjoyed volleyball, soccer, and other team games while staying safe and hydrated. And to top it all off—thanks to the generous support of Indian Springs Church and Grace Klein Community—campers have been treated to ice pops and refreshing grapes during breaks. These cool-down moments have become a favorite part of the day and serve as small reminders of the care and kindness of our community partners.



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## Back to the Basics: Literacy Anchors Everything

Amidst all the excitement, we've stayed laser-focused on our goals to combat summer slide by encouraging reading and math literacy with our campers using The SmartPlay's BASIC Curriculum.

Each day includes structured academic time, guided by our camp instructors and tailored to each camper's skill level. Through group activities, one-on-one support, and interactive learning, we're helping each child stay sharp during the summer months.

We will remain committed to our focus on reading and math for the duration of camp, creating space for learning to continue—even in the midst of horses, music, and drones.

Each day offers opportunities for campers to strengthen their skills in a fun and supportive setting.



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# Final Thoughts

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## Wrapping Up Week Two – Onward to New Adventures!

Looking ahead to Week Three, we look forward to welcoming our partners from the Shelby County Alabama Extension Office, who will lead a series of engaging, hands-on STEM workshops. Campers will dive into exciting 4-H topics including:

- Rocketry and propulsion
- Civil engineering and structural design
- Electric circuits and energy flow
- Energy science and sustainability
- Basic business and marketing concepts

This partnership will not only support academic enrichment but will also help our campers connect STEM learning to real-world challenges and future career paths. From launching rockets to brainstorming product ideas, campers will sharpen their critical thinking while having a blast!

Finally, we're especially grateful to our partners and sponsors for making this camp possible for our military, veteran, and local families located in Shelby, Jefferson, and Tuscaloosa Counties.

We're excited to kick off next week's camp programming!

