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Summer and Learning Make a Great Team

By John Brandon

Thursday, July 9th is National Summer **Learning** Day. That's right—contrary to popular belief, summer and learning DO go together and young people across our community are the direct beneficiaries of this new way of thinking. If young people are going to do well in school and be fully prepared for the world of work, they need year-round opportunities to learn more and build essential skills. It is past time that we revise our notion that summertime is when learning takes a vacation.

Consider these facts from the National Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University:

- Over 100 years of research shows that young people experience significant learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer.
- Most students lose about two months of grade level math skills and low income students lose more than two months of reading skills as compared to middle class peers.
- Children lose academic knowledge but many youth at high risk of obesity actually gain weight during the summer break.
- Parents consistently cite summer as the most difficult time to ensure their children have productive things to do.

In our community, thousands of children and youth take part in hundreds of programs that offer a safe place to be, caring and interested adults, and endless opportunities to build knowledge, skills, and competencies which will help to keep them on the road to future success. They get the chance to conduct science experiments; put on musical and theatrical productions; participate in dance, music, and artistic expression; practice fundamental and skills development in sports; and explore career opportunities. They read, do algebra, experience history, explore geography, and develop computer skills. They learn to think critically, work in teams, pursue individual interests, and appreciate diversity. And at the end of the summer, they are refreshed, energized, and better prepared to take on the challenges of the next grade level at school.

The Summer Youth Program Fund partners, a group of local public and private funders who have invested almost \$2.8 million dollars in 176 programs this year; the National Center for Summer Learning of Johns Hopkins University; and MCCOY Inc. invite you to join with us in marking this national day in recognition of these high quality learning experiences that are making a big difference in the lives of young people in our city. Our local celebration will be hosted by Kaleidoscope Youth Center/Urban Student Enrichment Program at St. Richard's School, 33rd and N. Meridian Sts beginning at 3:30 p.m. I can guarantee you—it will be a real learning experience!

John Brandon is the president of MCCOY (Marion County Commission on Youth), the youth services intermediary for central Indiana. MCCOY's mission is to champion the positive development of youth through leadership on key issues and support of the youth worker community. MCCOY's vision is that every young person in central Indiana has opportunities to thrive, learn, engage and contribute.