

# Minnesota Farmers Union

# Overnight Summer Camp Handbook

Updated 2026



**Mission: To instill ethics of respect, social responsibility, civic and cooperative engagement in young people through summer camp and Minnesota agriculture experience**

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## Camp Contact Information

### Audrey Jerome, Minnesota Farmers Union Education and Camp Director

- Reach Audrey for inquiries about camp programming, dates, and logistics. Email is preferred for most inquiries. [audrey@mfu.org](mailto:audrey@mfu.org).
- For immediate questions you may call the Minnesota Farmers Union office line at 615-639-1223 or Audrey’s direct Line at 651-895-9860.

### Minnesota Farmers Union Office

This office serves as our administrative location as well as our Twin Cities Day Camp homebase.

**Phone: 651-693-1223**

**305 Roselawn Ave E  
Suite #200  
Saint Paul, MN 55117**

### Sibley State Park (Overnight Camp Location)

**Phone: 320-247-7810**

**800 Sibley Park Road NE  
New London, MN 56273**

## Registration & Forms

Registration can be completed online [here](#) or by calling the MFU Office at 615-639-1223. You should receive an automated confirmation email within a few minutes of registering online through our UltraCamp software.

**All camp forms are due by May 15.**

Forms required for all campers:

- Contact Information and Agreement Form
- Physical Examination Form
- Camper Questionnaire

Parents/Guardians also have the option to complete our Photo and Video Waiver Form.

## Communication from camp

### Prior to arrival

Registered families can expect an email from camp with updates and reminders one month and one week prior to each camper's arrival.

### During Campers Experience

Campers are not allowed to have cell phones or smart watches at camp. Except in emergencies, phone and email by campers are off limits to preserve the camp experience.

### Visiting Camp

We do not allow visitors at camp during camp sessions to preserve safety and for an immersive camp experience. Parents and family members are welcome to tour the camp on arrival and departure day.

### Mail at Camp

We kindly ask families NOT to send camper mail to our overnight camp locations due to complexity and unreliability of receiving mail during camp sessions. You may consider giving campers with letters on arrival day for them to open during their camp experience.

## Camper Expectations

### Essential Eligibility Criteria

Please ensure you and your camper understand our Essential Eligibility Criteria for attendance at Minnesota Farmers Union Camp.

If you cannot meet certain criteria or if you have questions regarding these criteria, please get in touch with our office. We will make every reasonable effort to make accommodations for each camper unless our leadership team deems otherwise. For example, if they will compromise camper experiences, the safety of other campers or our team, or place an undue burden on Minnesota Farmers Union.

After instruction all campers must be able to:

- Understand verbal and/or visual instructions.

- Understand basic safety instruction or direction in English in an emergency.
- Communicate personal distress, injury, or need for assistance.
- Be self-sufficient in basic self-care and hygiene such as hydration, nourishment, bathroom use, and dress.
- Adhere to medication, treatment plans outlined by parent/guardians or medical professional(s) as needed.
- Adapt to the physical and emotional rigors of a residential camp environment.
- Respect the wilderness areas, camp infrastructure, and partner spaces and abide by all host instructions.
- Willingly contribute to group tasks and responsibilities.
- Contribute to and maintain a physically, mentally, and emotionally safe environment for self and others.
- Act independently and as part of the community.

## Code of Community

Please ensure you and your camper understand our Code of Community prior to attending camp. Additionally, camper parents must sign our agreement to this code as part of camp registration. Minnesota Farmers Union staff are trained and make great efforts at coaching agreed upon behaviors. If we find that we are unable to redirect your camper's behavior, we may be in contact with you.

**We reserve the right to send a camper home, without refund, if consistent misbehavior affects their or other camper's experiences.**

Behaviors you agree to not engage in as a Minnesota Farmers Union Camper:

- Use of vulgar or abusive language, name calling, or shouting at others in anger.
- Physical contact with another person in an angry or threatening way.
- Any demonstration of sexual activity or sexual contact that impacts others.
- Engaging in exclusive relationships.
- Harassment or intimidation by words, gestures, body language, or any other menacing behavior.
- Theft or behavior that results in the destruction of property or the natural environment.
- Carrying, concealing, or using objects as weapons.
- Using or possessing alcohol, tobacco, vape pens, controlled substances, and misuse of prescription drugs throughout Farmers Union Camp experiences.
- Engaging in repeated or ongoing risky behavior that endangers the wellbeing of self or others.

## Bullying Policy

Bullying is inexcusable at Minnesota Farmers Union Camp and all associated educational programming. All participants are expected to treat others with respect and care. We ask that you encourage your camper to be a positive influence on others at camp and speak with a trusted camp leader if there are any issues. Campers contribute to their own safety when they know what is acceptable and what to expect from staff and fellow campers, and if they feel empowered to let employees know. Failure to meet MFU's standards of respectful

behavior may result in communication with Parents/Guardians for assistance and potentially the dismissal of the camper. MFU leadership addresses all incidents of bullying. We train all camp staff to identify bullying and to promote honest communication between themselves and campers. Our goal is to work together as a team to ensure that campers have a positive camp experience where they can build resilience, confidence, friendships, and fond camp memories.

## Child Abuse Prevention

Safety is our number one priority. We work hard to ensure your campers have safe camp experiences. We do not take for granted the trust that parents/guardians place in us when they place their campers in our care. Our staff have been selected to work at camp following a rigorous screening process including interviews, reference checks, and background checks and receive comprehensive training around practices and policies that promote child safety. You can help your camper contribute to their own safety by helping them to understand a few basic expectations prior to coming to camp:

- Campers will be asked to stay in groups of at least three people while at Camp, never one on-one with another participant or staff.
- Campers should expect staff to be in cabins, supervising, while campers are present.
- Staff are expected to supervise areas and times that offer privacy (bathrooms, showers, changing clothes).
- If at any time your camper feels uncomfortable, they should reach out to our Director of Education and Camp, or any of our staff.

We encourage you to talk to your children regularly about their experiences, the counselors, and other camp staff they interacted with at camp. If, as a result, there is ever a concern regarding the safety and protection of your child, please notify us immediately.

## Preparing for Camp

### What Campers Can Expect:

**Campers can expect to learn a lot and work with new people:** Minnesota Farmers Union Camp will teach campers about Farmers Union history, civics, co-op principles and practices, and current issues in agriculture and rural life. Campers will be working with big groups and small groups during various points of camp. This means campers can also expect to grow their leadership and communication skills as they meet new people and build positive relationships with other campers.

**Campers can expect adventure:** Camp includes a variety of activities and conditions. Sometimes there are unexpected rainy days. A positive attitude and enthusiasm for new experiences and friendships are the best things you can bring to camp.

**Campers can expect to make the experience their own:** Campers will get to create goals and expectations alongside staff and other campers during their session. Campers gain decision making skills around what activities and challenges they decide to take on while at camp.

## What to Bring

- A sleeping bag and a twin sized fitted sheet
- A pillow
- 1-2 pajamas
- 2 pairs of sturdy footwear that can get dirty (i.e. tennis shoes not Crocs) \*
- A pair of shoes to swim in—will get wet and sandy
- 2-4 pairs of shorts
- 1-2 pairs of long pants
- 1-2 long-sleeved shirts or sweatshirts
- 6 T-shirts
- 6 pairs of underwear
- 6 pairs of socks
- 1-2 swimming suits
- Rain jacket/pants or poncho
- 2 towels
- Personal toiletries
- A flashlight (headlamps are great)
- Water bottle
- Insect repellent and sunscreen
- Dressy-casual outfit for final banquet evening
- Required medications in their original containers

\*Flip-flops, Crocs, or “slides” may be used for showers, not activities or walking around camp. Campers without proper footwear such as sneakers may not be able to participate in all camp activities for safety reasons.

### Consider Bringing:

- Theme night costumes (*information on theme nights will be sent in pre-camp emails and can be found on camp’s social media pages*)
- A camera
- Hat for sun protection
- Journal and pen
- Paper, envelopes and stamps or pre-addressed postcards
- Books and small games

### Do Not Bring:

- Cell phones\*
- Smart watches\*
- Music players or video games\*
- Food or drinks
- Fireworks, knives, or weapons
- Personal sports equipment
- Pets

*\*(If brought, cell phones and smart watches will be labeled with your name and stored in our camp safe for the duration of your time at camp)*

## Laundry at Camp

Campers will not have access to laundry during their overnight stay. Please plan accordingly if you think you will want extras of any of the above.

## Lost and Found

If you return home and realize you have left something at camp, either call us or send an email to [audrey@mfu.org](mailto:audrey@mfu.org) and we will do our best to try to find it for you. Please assist us with Lost & Found by labeling everything with your camper's full name. Valuable and meaningful items should be left at home for safekeeping. Minnesota Farmers Union is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged items.

# Arrival and Departure Day

## Transportation

Parents must provide transportation for your campers on the first and last day of camp. The Sibley State Park address is:

**800 Sibley Park Road NE  
New London, MN 56273**

## Carpool

Within our registration system campers may sign up to be included in our carpool list. Those who sign up for the carpool list will receive contact information for other participating families via email in May. Carpooling is then self-facilitated between camper families before camp.

# Life at Minnesota Farmers Union Camp

## Money & Valuables

Camps often serve as an equalizing respite from the real world where campers do not need to concern themselves with things that can often be stressful in their normal lives such as social media or money. All camper's phones, smart watches, or other digital devices as well as cash and other valuables will be secured in the camp safe during each session. Campers should be prepared to either not bring a cell phone to camp or hand it in along with any cash on the first day of each session. Per our communication section, except in emergencies, phone and email by campers are off limits to preserve the camp experience. Parents/guardians can also expect not to hear from camp or campers during their stay at overnight camp.

## Education

At Minnesota Farmers Union Camp, our mission is to instill in campers an ethic of respect, social responsibility, civic and cooperative engagement during their time at camp. This learning occurs both through focused formal lessons with specific associated activities, and through daily life at camp. Staff at camp are trained to facilitate

engaging and age-appropriate learning around such topics as Minnesota Farmers Union history, cooperative principles, and current challenges in agriculture.

Some camp activities, such as group games, service projects, or KP (kitchen patrol) duties require campers to figure out ways to engage with others respectfully, take personal initiative, resolve conflict, and practice resilience through maintaining a positive attitude and unconditionally positive regard for their fellow campmates and leaders.

We hope campers will leave this summer camp experience not only with more information on current civic and agricultural issues, but also the social tools to face challenges with respect and resilience in their everyday lives.

## Other Overnight Camp Activities

At Minnesota Farmers Union Camp, campers get to participate in several activities each day. These include enjoying swimming and beach time at the Sibley State Park designated swimming area. Campers can participate in all-camp games on the athletic field, hikes around the park, and evening dances. Each session ends in a final banquet night celebration in which campers may wear dressier clothes and celebrate the end of camp together.

### Theme Nights

As per tradition, each night except for the final banquet night, campers dress up in a fun theme decided by the Youth Advisory Council. Theme nights are posted in advance on our website so campers can prepare and pack accordingly if they choose to participate. Participation in theme nights is not required but is encouraged as a fun and silly activity!

## Rest Time & Relaxation

Camp has full days of structured social time and activities, but it also can be a time for young leaders to take a breather from the rigors of daily life and technology to reflect and care for oneself. Each afternoon at camp there will be time for campers to rest quietly and reflect. Even the most extroverted campers deserve time to rest and understand their own limits and needs. Campers are also encouraged to “challenge themselves by choice” and take time to hydrate, eat, and rest as their bodies tell them is necessary.

## Group Size and Structure

Farmers Union camps value cooperative principles in the camp structure, which means that unlike at most traditional camps, our campers and staff work together and delegate tasks equitably in various group sizes throughout the session. For example, a camper will have a cabin group that they get to know and build expectations around for the session, but they will have another group for games or challenges, and another for KP duties. This gives campers lots of opportunities to build connections with new people, practice communication outside of their immediate or regular social circle and live in a way that embodies a cooperative spirit.

## Cabin Mate Requests

At Minnesota Farmers Union we expect all campers to arrive ready to welcome and show inclusivity to everyone they meet at camp. All campers interact with many new people and do not operate within a certain group during their session at camp. Most campers sign up for camp on their own, but we understand that having a buddy with you in a cabin may make the camp experience less daunting.

MFU Summer Camp will honor cabin mate requests if they meet the following criteria:

- They are between only two people
- Share the same gender housing preference
- They are mutually requested in our registration system

## Staff

Minnesota Farmers Union Camp Staff are expected to act as role models to campers and each other. Staff are selected based on an individual's ability to show care, empathy, patience, capability, and rapport building with others. All staff must undergo rigorous staff training that includes a lifeguard certification with CPR and First Aid, child abuse prevention, community expectations, and supporting an environment for mental health.

## Food at MFU Camp

To no surprise, food and dining are very important to us at Minnesota Farmers Union!

Overnight campers and staff receive three hot meals per day from our qualified kitchen staff, as well as an evening snack. All meals are cooked from scratch in the dining hall and most often they are sourced from our member farms with local ingredients!

We can accommodate most food allergies and dietary needs. Contact us with any concerns as our kitchen does source food from facilities that also produce common food allergens.

## Camp Progression

Each of our camps offers increased opportunities for independence, leadership, and depth of learning. In general, our camps follow the following age progression:

Camp	Days in session	Camper age	Grade in fall:
Twin Cities Day Camp	5	6 7 8	1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Elementary Camp	4	8 9 10 11	4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , and 6 <sup>th</sup>
Junior Camp	5	11 12 13 14	6 <sup>th</sup> 7 <sup>th</sup> 8 <sup>th</sup> 9 <sup>th</sup>
Senior Camp	6	14 15 16 18	9 <sup>th</sup> 10 <sup>th</sup> 11 <sup>th</sup> 12 <sup>th</sup>

### What about flexibility?

Campers who are 8, 11, and 14 during the summer camp session may choose to attend the camp in which they feel the most comfortable. Campers and families should consider time away from home, and the depth of learning in camp lessons, and the peer group when deciding between possible sessions.

## Continuing Leadership Opportunities through MFU Camp

### Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)

Each year at Minnesota Farmers Union Overnight Camp, a group of individuals known as the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) serve as peer leaders and assist in developing a sense of belonging and positive energy as well as activities, lessons, and new curriculum at camp. YAC members are expected not only to be exemplary peer leaders while at camp but must also attend several council meetings throughout the year to discuss camp related programming and policy as well as a day of training prior to their camp session.

### Torchbearers

The Torchbearer Award is given to exceptional graduates of our leadership camps each year and is the highest honor available to participants in our youth education programs. Since 1941, Torchbearers have been honored at Minnesota Farmers Union annual State Convention. Becoming a torchbearer marks the conclusion of a young adult's work in the Farmers Union youth programming and the beginning of their adult leadership role in Farmers Union.

To become a Torchbearer a young person must complete four years of Senior Camp and represent Minnesota at the [National Farmers Union All-States convention](#). At All-States campers may run for the National Youth Advisory Committee (NYAC). Please contact our Director of Education and Camp for more information on attending all states and becoming a Torchbearer.

## Health and Wellness at Minnesota Farmers Union Camp

### Health Services

Health and safety of all our campers is our biggest priority at MFU. All our staff are first aid, CPR, and AED, and lifeguard certified through the American Red Cross or other accepted institution. We will treat bumps, bruises, and scrapes at camp. In the case of illness or advanced injury, parents or emergency contacts are called to plan for treatment or pick-up. Sometimes families may experience a momentary delay in communication as we prioritize participant care and direct resources towards safety and wellness of those in our care in the event of a time sensitive emergency. All incidents will be reported to the parent/guardian by the Director of Education.

### Risk Management at Camp

Minnesota Farmers Union adheres to a high level of industry standard camp policies and processes. However, like all experiences in life, camp is not risk free. We cannot guarantee that no harm will befall a camper while at camp. For more information, please look at our Health Waiver Form or get in touch with us.

### Medications

Campers should arrive with both their prescribed and over-the-counter medications:

- Listed completely in their health history forms.

- In their original bottles inside a Ziplock bag with your camper's name written on the outside. Prescription medication must be in the original container and include dosage, frequency, and camper's name. Due to rules and regulations, we cannot accept any medications or supplements in pill boxes or loose in zip lock bags, nor may campers keep their own medication with them (except for Epi-pens and inhalers, which will be on each camper's person or held by a designated counselor for safe keeping during appropriate activities).
- Separate from the rest of camper's luggage so that you (parent/guardian) can hand them directly to our Director of Education at drop off.
- If possible, we prefer you to send only as many doses as the camper will need during their stay at camp.
- If your child takes medication during the school year, we encourage consistent use prior to and during camp to support a successful, positive, and consistent experience.

## Session Cancellations

### General Policies

Camper registration may be canceled by a parent/guardian up to one week prior to a session for any reason for a refund except the cost of the deposit. If a cancellation is requested within one week of the camp, the refund will be 50% of the original registration cost (not including the Minnesota Farmers Union membership fee, if purchased). No refund will be issued if the attendee fails to attend the registered camp without notice.

### Extenuating Circumstances

Minnesota Farmers Union Camps may be able to offer a partial refund in the case of illness or injury that results in an attendee leaving camp early, only if the attendee goes home within 24 hours of the camp start time. All other cases of illness or injury that result in an attendee leaving camp after the first 24 hours are not eligible for a refund.

If an attendee of a Minnesota Farmers Union Camp or an event is dismissed due to violation of Minnesota Farmers Union or MFU camp's code of conduct, no refund will be issued.

## Stay in Touch with MFU Camp!

Throughout the year we will update our [website](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#) camp pages with updates about camp activities, hiring, and news.

### Farmers Union Welcomes Everyone

Whether you're a farmer or just someone who cares about food security, renewable energy, trade issues, health care, land use, the environment and myriad other issues, you will find that Minnesota Farmers Union is a place where you have a voice. Help preserve family farms and rural communities by joining MFU as a member.

You can explore what it means to be a member and member benefits (including camp discounts) [here](#).