THE RECORDER

Hello Summer!

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PHOTO COURTESY OF STANFORD MUSEUM AND NATURE CENTER

Little ones can get an up-close look at the many residents of the Stamford Museum and Nature Center.

Rainy days, reimagined

Regional museums for all-weather family fun

By LAURA SCHILLER

School's out, the sun is shining, the pools are open — until suddenly, the forecast takes a turn. But a washout doesn't have to derail a summer day.

Across Westchester and nearby Connecticut, museums offer indoor escapes where kids can build, move, experiment and explore, with just enough group play to send everyone home happily tired.

Katonah Museum of Art

For many families in our area, the Katonah Museum of Art is an easy, close-to-home option that won't require a gas tank refill. At the KMA, the Pollack Family Learning Center offers a drop-in art-making space that evolves alongside the museum's exhibitions — an ideal rainy afternoon stop.

This summer, visitors can craft tiny dollhouse textiles and miniature furnishings in tandem with "Diplomacy at Home: The Domestic Lives of the Founding Families" (June 28 through Oct 4), presented in collaboration with the Friends of John Jay Homestead. The Learning Center will feature period-inspired dollhouses that offer a glimpse into early American interiors through time.

Projects range from simple stamping activities, like wallpaper patterns for younger children, to more detailed design work, like crafting a miniature chaise lounge for older kids. For those who discover an inner architect, August brings a week-long miniature-making camp for ages 5–12.

On June 13, as part of "Art in Bloom," KMA will host a family-friendly art and nature workshop in

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Museums

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its 3,000-square-foot sculpture garden. In collaboration with Wave Hill, participants can create tiny gardens and paint en plein air using watercolor techniques.

Katonah Museum of Art is located at 134 Jay St., Katonah. Visit katonahmuseum.org for more information.

Westchester Children's Museum

For a more play-driven experience, head south to the Westchester Children's Museum, where a rainy day comes with a full schedule of activity.

The museum's MakerSpace offers educator-led projects in art, design, technology, engineering and science. Elsewhere, interactive exhibits invite kids to experiment and explore. "Wicked Weather" places young meteorologists in a broadcast-style setup, while "Color in Motion" turns light into an experiment, with shifting red, blue and green projections that respond to movement. A rotating double wheel lets children blend primary colors into new ones.

Another highlight is a large-scale Clixo installation spanning the museum's back wall. Using flexible, magnetized pieces, kids can click shapes together and transform flat forms into three-dimensional creations — an open-ended playground for design and imagination.

If you're already at Rye Playland when the weather shifts — or just need a break from the heat — the museum offers discounted admission with a Playland ticket.

Westchester Children's Museum is located at 100 Playland Parkway, Rye. Visit discoverwcm.org for more information.

Bruce Museum

Just over the Connecticut border, the Bruce Museum offers a mix of art and science programming designed to engage younger visitors.

Bruce Beginnings introduces ages 2 ½ to 5 to art through weekly themed sessions with a story, gallery visit and hands-on activity. Bruce Beginnings Junior, for ages 12–30 months, offers a sensory experience with songs, movement and guided discovery. Both programs are free with admission and first come, first served.

Older children can drop in for Art Adventures and Science Solvers, weekend programs held Sundays, from 1 to 3 p.m., that invite families to experiment with materials and ideas inspired by the museum's exhibitions.

The museum also hosts special events throughout the summer.

Bruce Museum is located at 1 Museum Drive, Greenwich, Conn. Visit brucemuseum.org for more information.



COURTESY OF THE BRUCE MUSEUM



COURTESY OF KATONAH MUSEUM OF ART



COURTESY OF WESTCHESTER CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Top left: Dioramas depicting life during the Triassic and Jurassic periods are on display at The Bruce.

Top right: The KMA' s visual and interactive Pollack Family Learning Center has children and their parents participating in hands-on projects.

Left: The Color Wall at the Westchester Children's Museum features a trio of shining spotlights that allow kids to experiment with light and movement.

Stamford Museum & Nature Center

If your kids prefer animals to art, the Stamford Museum & Nature Center is worth the short drive. Rain or shine, the animals are ready to greet visitors — and the recent arrival of six baby goats is an extra incentive to visit. In fact, rainy days can be ideal, with active animals and smaller crowds.

Indoors, the Bendel Mansion offers a makerspace activity, and at the Overbrook Nature Center, guests can sketch birds, use binoculars to spot nests, and explore displays featuring small animals, taxidermy, rocks and minerals.

The indoor exotic animal exhibit, Heckscher WILD!, showcases ecosystems ranging from rainforest to desert, with animals including cockroaches, chinchillas, snakes, turtles and tarantulas. Up-close petting opportunities are not unheard of here.

Don't miss the new planetarium, debuting its first summer season, with shows running Wednesday through Friday afternoons and all day on weekends. Programming ranges from kid-friendly options to the signature "Stamford Skies" presentation.

Stamford Museum & Nature Center is located at 9 Scofieldtown Road, Stamford, Conn. Visit stamfordmuseum.org for more information.

The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum

When summer rain washes away outdoor plans, The Aldrich offers interactive tours, hands-on activities and exhibitions designed to engage visitors of all ages.

Admission is free on the third Saturday of each month, when younger visitors can listen to picture-book readings inspired by current exhibitions before creating artwork of their own.

Advance registration is recommended, as family programs often fill quickly.

Beyond scheduled programming, the museum encourages children to explore creatively at their own pace. Families can visit throughout the summer for the museum's new exhibition, "The Aldrich Decennial: I Am What Is Around Me," opening June 7 and featuring work by Connecticut-based artists. The exhibition is part of an ongoing series presented every ten years — meaning today's young visitors may one day return as adults for the next installment.

An open studio space invites families to drop in and make art together, while an "art bar" stocked with materials and prompts offers inspiration for budding artists. Children can also pick up a scavenger hunt at the front desk, turning a walk through the galleries into an interactive search for shapes, colors and hidden details.

And when the rain finally clears, families can wander outside to explore the museum's three-acre campus and sculpture garden, where contemporary artworks continue beyond the gallery walls.

The Aldrich is located at 256 Main St., Ridgefield, Conn. Visit thealdrich.org for more information.

So there's no need to stay home when you feel that first raindrop, just as you're heading out to the car with your pool bag. These spots make a rainy summer day just as memorable.

Laura Schiller is a Westchester-based journalist covering the arts, culture, community life and events across the region.