

Suburban Mom

To be a Suburban Mom is to understand the art of juggling. The metaphor is obvious: spinning many balls in the air and preventing them from dropping to the ground, while smiling and maintaining a sense of grace, or at least trying. I've always wanted to learn the actual art of juggling, and some day, when I have some more time, I'll get around to it. But kids in this area don't have to wait, thanks to Camp College at Mercer County Community College, which is offering juggling as one of its many summer programs.

"In addition to learning how to juggle, I think the kids' self-confidence goes up at the same time, because my classes are also about setting goals and encouraging kids to ask as many questions as necessary to help achieve them," says 19-year-old Jesse De Agustin of West Windsor, who is teaching the course. "Also, the class is not all juggling. We have discussions and play hand-eye coordination games that will help hone in on their concentration and improve their juggling as well."

Jesse is truly "paying it forward," since he learned how to juggle at Camp College more than a decade ago as an 8-year-old under the tutelage of then-instructor Lou DeLauro, who now runs the non-profit charity, Juggling Life. Among other things, DeLauro's organization teaches youths with disabilities how to juggle. It is obvious that Jesse took his lessons seriously, as he is now a masterful juggler who enchants with his performance. He can juggle bowling

by Euna Kwon Brossman

pins, machetes, yes, machetes, (don't worry, this is not included in the Camp College curriculum), and even apples he can chomp in the middle of tossing them.

This will be Jesse's second summer as a Camp College instructor, and he relishes every moment of working with the kids. "Camp College clearly differentiates itself from any camp in the area because it gives the kids lots of flexibility and fun when it comes to class selection and structure. In one class kids can be juggling with me, and then in the next block they are playing sports in the quad. Then they can have lunch and choose a quiet

'I feel that Camp College is a great opportunity for younger kids to feed a curious mind,' says Jesse De Agustin.

activity such as arts and crafts. There are also specialty camps that meet for three hours a day for one week."

The theme for Camp College this year is "Have Fun Under the Big Top," and Jesse understands that many people associate juggling with the circus. While this is a natural connection, and the kids can have fun with that concept, Jesse explains that his classes are also associated with a more academic branch of juggling that takes the art to a higher level. In fact, the

International Juggling Association (IJA) has conventions of jugglers who stage extremely slick, elaborate, and entertaining shows and boasts a membership ranging from "top professionals to avid hobbyists to enthusiastic beginners."

When it comes to juggling, Jesse says there are some tricks and nuances that make it easier to pick up the skill. "It's essential that the kids have the right mindset and attitude even before we pick up one bean bag. That's why we spend a lot of time talking about other things that were challenging to learn — for example, riding a bicycle — that, after practice, become part of our skill set and then self-confidence that stays with us for life.

The right frame of mind then leads to tricks to learn the right technique, such as throwing two "X" marks on the wall, or throwing the beanbags and letting them fall on the floor. This reinforces the fact that juggling is the art of making great tosses. If the tosses are good, the catches will follow."

De Agustin is a 2008 graduate of High School South and currently a sophomore majoring in philosophy at the College of New Jersey. "I entered as an accounting major but after taking some philosophy courses, decided that the ability philosophy has to train our minds to think critically is invaluable. I may earn my Masters in Education and teach. I am also interested in working in Business to Business account management, but I'm exploring opportunities and keeping all my options open. Just like college (for big kids), I feel that Camp Col-

