

## A LUCKY BREAK

Lee Maletta, 5, of Huntington, shows off basketball skills at the Huntington YMCA, where kids can spend the day doing a wealth of activities during break.



From cooking to coding, there's something for every kid next week

BY ELLEN YAN  
Special to Newsday

Stella Ribando spends her free time making cream puffs and piping out perfect cookies. She's only 10. For the chef wannabe, winter camps at Babylon Mercantile have been pressure-free time off from school: "If you make a mistake, it still tastes good," she says.

Long Island's drop-in camps will serve up a wide range of courses during next week's break, from tapping maple trees for syrup to coding for a popular video game. Many camps combine fun with learning, giving students a break from the usual lessons but not from using their brains and muscles.

Not only do winter camps get Stella out of the house, she's sharpening interests beyond academics, says her mother Lucy Ribando: "It's something different that these kids can get their hands on."

#### KIDZ COURSE

**Cost:** Starting at \$27  
Youngsters run up a sloped ninja wall and when they make it over, Kidz Course owner Kristi Daly shouts, "Hit the buzzer!" It's like a scene out of the NBC "American Ninja Warrior" game show.

The camp features three different programs each day of February break, including obstacle dodging and designing a cap with an airbrush artist.

Making slime is the perennial favorite, Daly says, and this year, kids will add "instant snow," giving it an even more pliable consistency.

"I recognize that being in the same place for five hours every day can be mundane," Daly adds, "so I always try to add new and different things."

**Monday:** Winter Warmup Obstacle Fun and Graffiti Hats; **Tuesday:** Snow Cloud Slime; 75 Larkfield Rd., East

Northport; thekidzcourse.com; 888-809-5439

#### SCIENCE MUSEUM OF LONG ISLAND

**Cost:** \$100  
Tap a maple tree on the museum's grounds. What comes out looks and tastes like water. "What's very funny is kind of trying to get kids to understand the agonizing process and the patience required to create that delicious concoction that goes on your pancakes," says Caitlin Orellana, the museum's education director.

Other camps during February break week will explore rocks that glow, the magnetic force, reptiles, ingredients to make a perfect bubble and forensics to solve a mock crime scene.

**Tuesday:** Science Rocks; Feb. 19: Creatures and Critters and Force; Feb. 20: Scientific Mysteries; Feb. 21: Maple Sugaring; 1526 N. Plandome Rd., Manhasset; smli.org; 516-627-9400

#### GOLD COAST ARTS CENTER

**Cost:** Starting at \$105  
Acting, painting, dancing and even 3D animating can

**ON THE COVER** Angel Cuascut, 5, makes his way through an obstacle course at Kidz Course in East Northport.



From left, Kristi Daly, owner of Kidz Course, Henry Buffalino, Angel Cuascut, Max Ehrenpreis and Emma Cerny on the obstacle course.

fulfill the creative bent at this day camp.

"They get to experience a little bit of everything that we have to offer," says Julie Wostenholme, the marketing and design director. "They get a sense of what they really like."

One favorite for students is the theater, she says: "The true star come out. Even kids that are shy when they're with these other kids who just egg them on and really support them... when they're actually on the stage together, it just promotes such a great feeling of everybody supporting one another."

Call for dates; 113 Middle Neck Rd., Great Neck; goldcoastarts.org; 516-829-2570

#### THE CODER SCHOOL

**Cost:** \$125

Past students have created pickaxes, animals and characters to add to the popular video game Minecraft.

The Coder School, with four locations on Long Island, will teach students how to tailor Minecraft worlds or build their own games in half- and full-day camps.

"We can show them the



Max Ehrenpreis celebrates his impending 6th birthday on the obstacle course at Kidz Course, which will feature three different programs each day of February break.

program behind the visuals," says Christian Algarra, center director for the Commack and Roslyn locations.

Students will create "mods" or modifications to

the Minecraft gameplay and use "block codes," a set of programmed directions.

Locations in Bellmore, Commack, Roslyn and Syoset; thecoderschool.com

#### YMCA LONG ISLAND

**Cost:** \$75 plus membership  
At YMCA Long Island, the winter break is not just about play and science but a workshop to build self esteem and

do yoga with a teddy bear. The daily drop-off camps run from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. "It's for working parents so they can have fun and be with their peers and not be on their phones and devices and just make memories," says Mary-Beth Coursen, senior director of marketing and communications.

Each day will cover outdoor play if weather permits, art and science projects, sports and group games. Multiple locations; ymca.org

#### QUOGUE WILDLIFE REFUGE

**Cost:** Starting at \$75

Winter adaptation will be the center at the rescue group's camps as children brave some of the refuge's 305 acres looking for tracks and other signs of life, says program director Cara Fernandez.

In past camps, children learn how blubber helps some sea mammals survive the cold. They put on gloves, tenses

Crisco oil on it, then stick their hands in a bucket of ice water. "You won't be in the cold temperature," Fernandez promises.

Children will also see what color screech owls glow under ultra violet light and meet the refuge's newcomer, Sugar, a young opossum.

3 Old Country Rd., Quogue; quoguewildliferefuge.org; 631-653-4771

#### BABYLON MERCANTILE

**Cost:** \$95

Kids learn how to use the mixer, why they should level off flour measurements and how to adjust the temperature to caramelize onions during February break classes.

"We treat them like adults, and a lot of times, they're better behaved," remarks owner Donna Sesto.

The chocolate, pastry and Italian cooking classes sold out early, but the school has spots for its Mexican course, all food students can eat or take home.

"A lot of these kids will be like 'Ooh, I'm going to pack this up. My dad will love this,'" says general manager Debbie Fogarty, "and they don't want to eat it all."

Feb. 19: Mexican cooking class; 45 E. Main St., Babylon; babylonmercantile.com; 631-818-1100