

SMTX LIFE

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Rain clouds settle over the Smoky Mountains of East Tennessee, where the author developed an appreciation for hiking in wet weather. The changing sights, sounds and smells of the forest helped shape a lifelong love of rainy-day adventures. *Submitted photos*

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Trail Notes: Hiking in the Rain

Upon showing up at a friend's house after a hike in the rain, John Muir once said, "Don't pity me. Pity yourselves. You stay here at home, dry and defrauded of all the glory I have seen. Your souls starve in the midst of abundance!"

Keeping in mind John Muir also climbed a Douglas Fir to ride out a thunderstorm, I temper my recommendation to hike in the rain with a little more reason. Having grown up in the Smoky Mountains, I experienced rain as a regular part of trail life, and on occasion, even sought it out for a different kind of adventure. By adding a little rain to the trails of East Tennessee, pine needles effervesced, smoky clouds filled the hollers, and a gentle lullaby of raindrops on Tulip Popples rocked me along the trail. Hiking in the rain provided a different kind of trail joy, and the same is possible in Texas, if you know what to look out for.

While I'm more of a "Safety Fourth" kind of person, it's paramount to say don't go hiking during floods and stay away from low water crossings, especially if your rain gauge crests two inches. Similarly, the Greenbelt Alliance requests we stay off the single-track trails to keep erosion and ruts to a minimum. But once we check those two boxes, the real fun begins with what to wear.

There are two schools of thought when

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Black-bellied whistling ducks gather near the wetlands at Ringtail Ridge in San Marcos. The birds' distinctive calls add to the soundscape that hikers can experience along the boardwalk during a gentle rain.

Math camp adds up to summer success

STAFF REPORTS

For two weeks this summer, classrooms at Goodnight Middle School were filled with students tackling puzzles, exploring patterns and discovering that mathematics is about much more than finding the right answer.

The 2026 Mathworks Junior Summer Math Camp welcomed 176 students in grades 3-8 from June 8-18, bringing together young learners, Texas State University faculty, undergraduate fellows, graduate students and master teachers for an immersive experience focused on problem solving and mathematical discovery. Founded at Texas State more than 35 years ago by Dr. Max Warshawer, Mathworks was created to help students see mathematics in a different way.

"Mathworks is a place where kids discover that they can solve problems, that they can do hard things," Warshawer said. "The real goal is to empower kids to ask why things work and to become independent, fearless problem solvers, not just in math, but in anything they pursue in life."

Throughout the camp, students in Levels 1 through 5 participated in hands-on activities, collaborative investigations and challenging mathematical problems designed to strengthen critical-thinking skills while building confidence.

Rather than emphasizing memorization or simply finding the correct answer, the program encourages students to explore ideas, communicate their thinking and learn through discovery.

"The way we construct a lesson at Mathworks isn't, 'Here's this mathematical monument we're going to show you,'" said Dr. Cody Patterson, a Texas State mathematics professor and former Mathworks camper. "It's, 'Here's a problem we might be curious about. How can we use our mental faculties to address it?'"

Patterson's own journey reflects the program's lasting impact. After attending Mathworks as a student, he later returned as a counselor and now helps guide the next generation of mathematically curious learners.

One of the camp's central goals is helping students become comfortable taking risks and learning from mistakes.

"We try to create an environment where kids can be vulnerable, make mistakes, be authentic with one another and pursue things that are genuinely interesting to them," Patterson said.

This year's camp was supported through a partnership between Texas State University and San Marcos CISD. In addition to the 176 campers, the program included 25 Texas State undergraduate fellows, five graduate students, two faculty members and experienced master teachers who worked together throughout the two-week session.

Community support also plays an important role in the program's success. Organizers recognized the San Marcos Lions Club, H-E-B Tournament of Champions and other sponsors whose contributions help provide scholarships and opportunities for local students.

As another summer came to a close, students left with stronger mathematical skills and, organizers hope, a new perspective on learning.

"Students realize, 'I can do math,' and more importantly, 'Math is actually fun,'" Warshawer said. "It's about changing how they see themselves and their future."



Texas State mathematics professor Dr. Cody Patterson, left, visits with Mathworks founder Dr. Max Warshawer during the 2026 Mathworks Junior Summer Math Camp at Goodnight Middle School. Patterson attended Mathworks as a student before returning as a counselor and now helps lead the program. *Submitted photo*



Mathworks founder Dr. Max Warshawer visits with participant Elias Guzman during the 2026 Junior Summer Math Camp. The program encourages students to explore mathematics through problem solving, collaboration and discovery. *Submitted photo*



Elias Guzman participates in a Level 1 class taught by Mrs. Freese during the 2026 Mathworks Junior Summer Math Camp. Students spent two weeks tackling hands-on mathematical challenges designed to build confidence and critical-thinking skills. *Submitted photo*



Texas State faculty members, graduate students, undergraduate fellows, master teachers and staff helped lead the 2026 Mathworks Junior Summer Math Camp, which welcomed 176 students in grades 3-8 to Goodnight Middle School. *Submitted photo*