



# YOUTH PROGRAM HANDBOOK

# SUMMER 2026



---

LINCOLN LOG CABIN FOUNDATION





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Lincoln Log Cabin.....	Page 1
General Program Information.....	Page 2
Pioneer Day Camp.....	Page 3
Young Adult Interpreters (YAI).....	Page 4
Safety on the Farms .....	Page 5
Expectations and Rules for Participation.....	Page 6
Behavior Contract.....	Page 8

### CONTACT US:

Mail: 402 S. Lincoln Hwy Road, Lerna, IL 62440  
Phone: (217)345-1845, (217)345-6489  
Email: [education@lincolnlogcabin.org](mailto:education@lincolnlogcabin.org)

### VISIT US ONLINE:

<http://www.lincolnlogcabin.org>  
<https://www.facebook.com/lincolnlogcabin/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/lincolnlogcabin/>

## About Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site

Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site, part of the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area, preserves the 19th-century home of Thomas Lincoln and Sarah Bush Lincoln, father and step-mother of our 16th president. Abraham Lincoln was a lawyer living in Springfield by the time his parents moved here, but his burgeoning law practice often brought him to Charleston and the farm, especially during the 1840s. Abraham Lincoln also owned a portion of the farm which he deeded back to his father and step-mother for their use during their lifetime.

Today Lincoln Log Cabin is an 86-acre historic site that is owned and operated by the State of Illinois, managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Sites. The site includes an accurate reproduction of the Lincolns' two-room cabin that was reconstructed on the original cabin site in 1935-1936 as a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) project. The National Park Service oversaw the creation of Lincoln Log Cabin State Park with CCC labor. The CCC camp, Camp Shiloh, was located within the park's boundaries and its enrollees were WWI veterans. Today the ten acres in the northwest corner of the park where Camp Shiloh was located is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

A working, living history farm has been developed around the cabin, and a second historic farmstead, that of Stephen and Nancy Sargent, has been moved to the site to help broaden visitors' understanding both of life in the 19th century and Lincoln's legal practice in the community. The site also includes the Moore Home, where Lincoln bid farewell to his family in 1861 before leaving to assume the Presidency, and the gravesites of Thomas and Sarah Lincoln at the Thomas Lincoln Cemetery.

## About The Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation

The Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation promotes, preserves, and interprets the historic, cultural, and natural resources at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site through philanthropic activities, educational programming, and volunteer coordination.

The Foundation supports many unique educational programs at the site with volunteers and financial support. The Foundation sponsors Lincoln Log Cabin's summer youth programs. Special events, exhibitions, visiting scholars, volunteer staffing, gift shop management, and preservation efforts, such as restoration of the Moore Home, are all critical needs being met by the Foundation.

## Mission of Our Summer Youth Programs

Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site and Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation are committed to providing a safe, friendly and productive environment where children can obtain knowledge regarding both the Lincoln family and Abraham's local friends, who had an impact on his life here in Illinois. We also want youth to experience the persistence and determination necessary for families like the Lincolns to sustain themselves on Illinois' farms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We believe that through experiences here at Lincoln Log Cabin, the children we serve will gain skills helping them to achieve success in their own lives.

To accomplish our mission, we provide unique summer programs including our **Pioneer Day Camps**, a 5-day immersion into the lives of rural children in the 19th century, and **Young Adult Interpreters**, a 10-week program for teens to refine their skills in an area of particular interest to them and to participate more fully in the interpretive programs at Lincoln Log Cabin.





# GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION:

## Location

Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site is located eight miles south of Charleston and 14 miles southeast of Mattoon, Illinois, at 402 S. Lincoln Hwy Rd., Lerna, IL 62440.

## Hours of Operation

Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site is open from 8:30am-dusk. During the summer season, youth programs operate from 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. *We cannot provide supervision for children before 9 a.m. or after 4:30 p.m.*

## How to Register

Registration for all youth programs is available online at <https://www.lincolnlogcabin.org/ed.html>. Payment may be made online via credit or debit card, or checks can be mailed to the site, made payable to Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation. All fees must be paid in full by the first day of the program. Registrations are reserved on a first come, first served basis.

## What is the program cancellation/change policy?

We understand that things happen and a change may be necessary. We are happy to exchange weeks for your child if there is available space in a different program. Refunds are available up to two weeks prior to the start of each program. Exceptions to this may be made in the case of a family death or medical emergency.

## Attendance, Drop-Off, and Pick-Up Procedures

Please call (217) 345-1845 or (217) 345-6489 at 9:00 am if you know your child will not be able to attend on a scheduled day. You may leave a message or speak directly with program staff. After hours, you may also email anticipated absences to [education@lincolnlogcabin.org](mailto:education@lincolnlogcabin.org).

All youth program participants must be signed in daily under the Visitor Center portico. Children must remain with their parent/guardian at all times until signed in and under the supervision of a program staff member. At the end of the day, they must be signed out by an authorized individual. Children will *NOT* be allowed to leave with anyone who is not authorized for pick up. Please notify program staff immediately if a person not previously specified is to pick up your child. We can always add new adults to the list of those authorized.

## Illness

If a youth program participant appears to be ill, complains of illness, has an apparent fever, or becomes injured, program staff will attempt to contact the parent or guardian on record to come pick up the child. If we are unable to reach the primary contact person, we will attempt to contact additional emergency contacts. Any camper with a fever or possible contagious condition will be isolated in a supervised area until a parent or authorized individual arrives. Please notify the Youth Program Director IMMEDIATELY if your child contracts a communicable disease in order that other parents or guardians may be given the necessary information.

## Medication

If your child requires preventative or emergency medications, please share that information on the medical information section of the registration form for their program. Employees of Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site and the Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation are not licensed to distribute or administer medications of any type. You or your child must be capable of carrying and administering said medication. Any medications must be in the original bottle marked with your child's name, dosage schedule, etc.

## Questions

Please contact us at [education@lincolnlogcabin.org](mailto:education@lincolnlogcabin.org) or by calling the Lincoln Log Cabin Visitor Center at (217) 345-1845 or (217) 345-6489. The docent will forward any messages to program staff. Thank you for your interest in Lincoln Log Cabin's summer youth programs!

# PIONEER DAY CAMP

These popular 5-day programs offer children ages 8-12 the chance to enjoy age-appropriate educational and recreational activities based on the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century using tools and techniques of that time. Campers will get a taste of living history - cooking a noon meal, trying their hands at traditional crafts and skills, and learning all about life on the farm!

The cost is \$100 per child per session, which includes a camp t-shirt, the noon meal each day, and all supplies. Pre-registration is required. Each camp will have a maximum of 10 participants to ensure individualized attention and learning opportunities.

**Trailblazers I : June 9-13, 2026**

**Trailblazers II: June 23-27, 2026**

**Trailblazers III: July 7-11, 2026**

**Trailblazer IV: July 21-25, 2026**

Note: Trailblazers sessions aren't consecutive. Children can attend one, two, or all— as many as they wish!

**On Saturday afternoon, the last day of each camp, families are invited to see what their campers have learned and sample a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century dessert prepared by the kids.**

## What will campers do during the week?

The program is flexible in order to take advantage of special activities and events happening on the farms or to respond to weather concerns. Activities might include cooking over the hearth, crafting, attending performances, visiting the museum, doing chores in the gardens or on the farm, learning from craftspeople, and working closely with our historic interpreters. Activities are tailored to the theme of the program and the age of its participants.



## What should campers wear?

Campers must wear long jeans or skirts and closed toed shoes, as we may be around cooking fires. Socks and shoes must be worn at all times. On the first day of camp, campers will receive a camp t-shirt. There are restrooms available in the visitor center to change into the t-shirt. Please take it home each day to wash for use the next day.

## Should campers bring anything for lunch or snacks?

Campers will be eating a noon meal prepared on the farm and do not need to bring lunch. If you are not comfortable with your child eating this meal, please send them with a sack lunch to enjoy outside. There is no refrigeration or microwave available. Campers should bring a reusable water bottle, labeled with their name, to camp each day. Please take the water bottle home daily to wash.

## Are there any items that campers should NOT bring?

Please **do not** send campers with backpacks, purses, or additional items, including electronic devices, smart watches, tablets, or phones. If you have questions about a specific item your child wants to bring, please contact program staff. There will not be lockers available to store belongings, and the site has very limited cell service. If your camper needs to call or you need to get a hold of your child, there are phones available in the Visitor Center. You can reach youth program staff by calling (217) 345-1845 or (217) 345-6489. The docent can reach us on the farm.

## My child would like to attend Pioneer Day Camp, but is not 8 years old yet. Can they still participate?

In order for a child to participate in Pioneer Day Camp, they must be 8-12 years old on the first day of the program. Younger children are encouraged to come to other programs such as our monthly story time or gardening programs. Older children are encouraged to participate in our Young Adult Interpreters program.

# YOUNG ADULT INTERPRETERS

This 10-week program offers older children (ages 13-17) the opportunity to participate more fully in the living history programs on the farms. Young Adult Interpreters (YAI) dress in period attire and work closely with our historic interpreters to learn about the site's history, to learn mid-19<sup>th</sup> century skills through hands-on participation, and to develop the communication skills necessary to share their knowledge with the visiting public — all while making lasting friendships and memories!



Participants commit to a minimum of 10 days between June and August, generally at least once/week (Wednesday-Saturday) from 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. The cost is \$100 per participant, which includes appropriate clothing, the noon meal each day, and all supplies. Pre-registration is required. Each program day will have a maximum of 10 participants to ensure individualized attention and learning opportunities.

Young Adult Interpreters who have actively participated in the program will be invited on an end-of-summer field trip and Overnighter just for them! After a full day exploring a regional historic site or attraction, YAIs will head back to Lincoln Log Cabin for a night of games, gabbing, and fun before heading back to school for the year. More information about the trip and Overnighter (including a request for additional chaperones!) will be sent out mid-summer. YAIs may also be invited to participate in special events through the year.

## What will YAIs do during the week?

The program is flexible in order to take advantage of special activities and events happening on the farms or to respond to weather concerns. YAIs actively participate in daily chores, such as cooking over the hearth, gardening, splitting rails, mucking barns, and harvesting wheat. In the afternoons, YAIs might take a break to play historic games, learn from visiting craftspeople, or see a performance or educational program in the auditorium.

Additionally, each young adult interpreter will be given the opportunity to choose an aspect of 19<sup>th</sup> century life to more thoroughly explore. Whatever their interest— cooking, sewing, knitting, weaving, woodworking, gardening, etc.—they will be provided with time to hone their craft under the guidance of our skilled staff and volunteers and to build confidence in sharing their knowledge with the visiting public.

## What should YAIs wear?

YAIs will be issued appropriate historical clothing and most accessories, and are responsible for maintaining the clothing issued to them. Socks and shoes must be worn at all times. Participants should wear tall cotton or wool socks or stockings (white, beige, black, or muted colors). When possible, Lincoln Log Cabin will issue historically appropriate shoes or boots to participants. If nothing in our inventory fits, participants may be required to provide their own footwear—brown or black leather shoes or boots with a round or slightly square toe and low heel.

*Please email [education@lincolnlogcabin.org](mailto:education@lincolnlogcabin.org) to schedule a time to pick up clothing before the program begins.*

## Should YAIs bring anything for lunch or snacks?

YAIs will be eating a noon meal prepared on the farm and do not need to bring lunch. If you are not comfortable with your child eating this meal, please send them with a sack lunch to enjoy . No refrigeration or microwave is available.

## Are there any items that YAIs should NOT bring?:

YAIs should **not** bring any “modern” items such as water bottles, backpacks, purses, electronic devices, smart watches, tablets, or phones. If you have questions about a specific item your child wants to bring, please contact program staff. There will not be lockers available to store belongings, and the site has very limited cell service. If your child needs to call or you need to get a hold of your child, there are phones available in the Visitor Center. You can reach youth program staff by calling (217) 345-1845 or (217) 345-6489. The docent can reach us on the farm.

# SAFETY ON THE FARMS

## Allergens and the Elements

Youth programs are primarily held outdoors in the historic areas of the site. Should your child need bug spray or sunscreen, please apply it at home or before entering the Lincoln Log Cabin Visitor Center. Program staff will also have bug spray and sunscreen available if your child should need it throughout the day.

Our 19th-century agricultural environment contains many common allergens such as pollen, dust, bees, animals, etc. We are unable to alter activities to prevent exposure to these conditions. If your child is prone to life-threatening allergies and is likely to require medical attention in such an environment, you may wish to reconsider participation in these programs. If you have concerns regarding food allergies, food sensitivities, or other dietary restrictions, please share that information on the medical information section of the registration form.

Please note that employees of Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site and Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation are not licensed to distribute or administer medications of any type.

## Animals

Although the “critters” on the farms are generally friendly, they are real farm animals. Sheep hooves are sharp and they weigh enough that it hurts if they step on you. Pig teeth are sharp like a dog’s and they may bite on accident when being fed. Unless asked to do so and accompanied by program staff, program participants should never enter a pasture, pen, or barn with livestock.

Although pretty harmless, poultry still deserve respect. Do not chase the chickens or turkeys! They sometimes hiss and peck if you are trying to move them to get eggs, and their beaks can pinch. Roosters and toms might try to defend their hens, not realizing you mean no harm.

The farm cats are generally friendly, but do still have teeth and claws. They can be petted, but shouldn’t be chased or picked up. These are working mousers with a job to do, even if they take naps in the cabin most of the day!



## Cookware, Fires, and Kitchen Implements

Program participants may be learning to cook using mid-19th century technology and tools. Fires will be located outside in the fire pits or inside in the historic kitchens. Program participants must be aware of their surroundings and not walk across the hearths! For safety, all clothing worn on the farms should be natural fibers such as cotton, linen, or wool. Girls in particular must be very careful with their dresses or skirts around the fires—watch out for gusts of wind that may blow skirts into the fire! Extreme care must be taken when digging coals out of the fire in order to cook food. Girls should ALWAYS tuck skirts between their legs whenever near the fire to prevent skirts from blowing into the fire.

Program participants may also be using sharp knives, pokers (forks), and heavy cast iron cookware. These hurt if dropped on your feet and also get very hot when put next to the fire. Remember: a hot lid looks like a cool lid. Always use a pot holder to carry ovens and lids while they are being used or after being used on the farm. Also, place lids with hot coals on the hearth (inside) or on a rock near the fire pit (outside), NOT in the grass or on the wood floor.

## Tools

Program participants may be using axes, saws, sledge hammers and wedges, pitchforks, and various other dangerous tools. It is very easy to injure yourself or someone else if not paying attention. Pointy things should always be pointed at the ground, not up in the air. Be very careful and always listen for instructions. Children will only be allowed to use these tools with supervision. Return all tools and knives to their proper place immediately after use. Remember that you may not bring knives from home, and an adult must be present whenever you use one.

Program participants must stay in the historic area with the group at all times unless they have permission to leave to use the restroom, take a break, etc. The hayloft, creek, and fishing pond are off limits except with permission, or when accompanied by program staff.

**The most important rule to remember when it comes to farm safety is: LISTEN**

# EXPECTATIONS AND RULES FOR PARTICIPATION

Through rational communication with children and sensitivity to their needs, feelings and capabilities, we promote a positive system of child management based on praise, two-way discussions, gentle reminders, humor and choices offered to children. We have incorporated the following expectations for program staff, program participants, and parents/guardians.

## Staff Responsibilities and Expectations

- To provide a safe and structured environment for children
- To treat each child fairly and equally as an individual, and with respect
- To communicate openly and regularly with parents or guardians

## Participant Responsibilities and Expectations

- To follow the expectations and rules for behavior.
- To respect other program participants
- To respect Lincoln Log Cabin staff members, animals, and property
- To remain with program staff at all times
- To participate in activities, and actively learn about life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

## Parent/Guardian Responsibilities and Expectations

- Dropping off/Picking up youth program participant(s) on time
- Signing youth program participant(s) in and out
- Sending youth program participant(s) with necessary items
- Notifying staff of illness
- To be open to communication from staff about child's behavior
- To work with staff for an agreeable solution to any problems that might occur
- To keep program staff informed of changes in contact information for emergency communications



**Participation in Lincoln Log Cabin's youth programs is a privilege. All program participants are responsible for their actions while on the farm. Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.**

When necessary, program staff have the right to remove a child from the group for a "time of reflection." If a behavior problem persists, the Youth Program Director will contact the parents/guardians to discuss the situation and the participant will be sent home for the day. Parents/guardians will then be responsible for sitting down with their child and filling out a behavior contract which will outline the agreed upon plan for improvement and consequences if improvement does not occur. The child will be allowed to attend the program again—with the understanding that their behavior will be improved—once the behavior contract has been filled out and signed by both a parent/guardian and the child. If problems persist, the participant will be sent home again with no option of returning. Program fees will not be refunded or exchanged for behavior-related dismissals.

## Complaint Procedures-

Program staff strive to make your child's experience in our programs an enjoyable time of activity and growth. Open communication among all those involved is essential to our program's development. Therefore, if you have any concerns about some aspect of our program implementation, we ask you to do one of the following:

1. Speak with the Youth Program Director about the situation
2. Write a letter of formal complaint. Please include the following information:
  - Your name, phone number and child's name
  - Brief description of incident or concern.
  - Brief description of any action you have already taken in relation to the incident or concern.
  - What measure you suggest be taken concerning your complaint

When a written complaint is received, it will be evaluated by the Youth Program Director and action will be taken when deemed necessary. A response, including a summary of the evaluation and what action has been taken, will be sent to the complainant. **\*NO ACTION WILL BE TAKEN ON ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS\***



# YOUTH PROGRAM BEHAVIOR CONTRACT

Youth Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Offending Behavior:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Plan for Improvement:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Consequences if Behavior Does Not Improve:

\_\_\_ Immediate Suspension (Authorized Individual will be required to pick up child within 90 minutes of notification)

\_\_\_ One day suspension (following day) from program

\_\_\_ Permanent suspension from program

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Director

