

Reflections On Summer Vacation

Summer brings many things: a change of pace and a change of scenery are two of my favorites. Now, most folks would expect that this refers to lazier days and time away on vacation... Well, I did take time to sleep in late (which many of you know means until sunrise as opposed to rising at 4 am), and I did travel to spend time with family and visit exotic places like Niagara Falls. However, my change in pace and change of scenery included more hours on the job both "at the office" and "away on assignment".

"At the office"

The summer began with planning for our "**Camp Creative UU.**" It included coordination of camp activities and over twenty adult volunteers for a program that served fourteen children ages 4-13. Opportunities for free expression through art, music, and drama resulted in a UUnique script about summer vacation. This allowed all of the children to perform in a way that featured them as UUnique individuals. The older children volunteered to record the week's events and final performance using a still camera & video recorder, while the other kids acted and sang as they told their story. Their program, which included a PowerPoint presentation and video showing, was featured at the July Potluck.

Thanks to all of you who helped with the program and attended the Potluck. I couldn't possibly list each of your names.... Please know that you are appreciated by the RE families and me.

"Away on assignment"

July brought the close of Camp Creative UU and the beginning of a personal and professional retreat for me. I traveled to The Mountain, a UU camp in Highlands, NC. There I had time to learn about many UU related topics, including the Youth Ministry, Conflict Resolution, and Pastoral Care. I was also able to connect with other DREs and build a foundation for future networking. The motto at the Mountain is to "create an environment that energizes people to work for positive change", and that's just what we did.

I also had personal time away from my own children (which is something that had not happened for three years). This served as time for free reading, personal & professional reflection, and getting close to Mother Nature. I rocked on the porch of the Lodge and read uninterrupted. I contemplated the universe as I sat on Meditation Rock, walked the Labyrinth, and scoped the 360 degree panoramic view from the Look-Out Tower. I enjoyed hikes up and down the Mountain as well as sacred moments that included a night time cloud slipping into our conference room at the Lodge.

Thanks for the opportunity to "get away". Much work was accomplished as I "embraced the diversity of life" atop The Mountain.

Stay tuned for news of the fall RE programming as we plan for the next school year, which is fast approaching....

-Debbie Johnson, DRE (Director of Religious Education)

Reflections on CAMP CREATIVE UU...(July 2007)

Meditation Made Easy (Or Not)!

Imagine asking a group of wiggly, excited campers to lie down on a mat, close their eyes and listen to a description of a far off garden, full of beautiful flowers, white puffy clouds floating in a blue, blue sky..... Well, you or I might just use this as the perfect way to take a nap, but of course for kids, slowing down, getting quiet, refocusing can be a real effort. But I told them it could really help them out when feeling just too busy, busy, busy. In fact, the first few minutes of our meditation time were spent being the busiest, busiest creature they could imagine: hopping, yelping, flying, buzzing like a bee. Once they had gotten a little bit of that energy out of their systems, they picked out a mat and a pillow and found a quiet spot (some had to be guided away from other busy, buzzy bees). I read from a wonderful book of children's meditations which parents might want to check out: Maureen Garth's Starbright: Meditations for Children and Sunshine: More Meditations for Children. Honestly, I wasn't sure it would "work" and results were varied. But when the kids sat down at the table to write or draw where they had gone and what they had seen, I was happy to find some beautiful places. My favorite was Trent's trip over the rainbow on a surfboard! We would have liked to

show you the process on the Sunday show, but that was asking for the moon... and we didn't have time to go there!

-----Dottie Mann

Camp Creative UU Folk Singing Our Folk Singing sessions at Camp Creative UU were gymnastic affairs, with a lot of dancing and acting out of songs like Shel Silverstein's "The Unicorn." ["There were green alligators and long-necked geese, Hump-backed camels and chimpanzees."] The more macabre aspects of "The Cat Came Back" were predictably popular, with the campers joining in lustily for the chorus each time it came up. We did a couple of bird songs from my CD "Talkin' to the Birds," but when Angelica asked me to sing the Ice Cream song, I was perplexed. Turned out, she wanted to do the song where, as she said, "I scream." So we did "The Water Turkey" for the Sunday Galleria ("When he pops out of the water, little girls will shriek"), as well as "Little Blue," which involves some nice pantomime. I was absolutely astounded on Sunday by the amount that the campers had soaked up during the week. Folk music seems to be alive and well with the younger generation!

--Dan Gribbin

Artistic Creativity Galore It was a pleasure to be a part of Camp Creative UU. What a wonderful opportunity to interact with all the kids (and not just the little ones :) I assisted the campers on a variety of projects including junk sculptures, journal covers and the highlight--tie dye t shirts! One of my very favorite moments took place on the first day. When working on journal covers. We had just introduced the project and the room was filled with the sounds of the kids moving about, discussing their ideas. Then as the room grew quiet it began to burst with creativity! The children dove right into the task at hand. No two journal covers were alike. Each one unique, just like the artist him/herself. I'm eager to be a part of Camp Creative UU next summer! Thank you, Debbie!

--Maura Riebensahm

Thanks to all who participated... campers, counselors, artists, and volunteers alike!!
