

## Stories From Peace Camp

Stories from Peace Camp 2009 would be easier to tell if this newspaper had a button you could push to hear the sounds, like how beautiful the word 'peace' sounds in Cherokee or Arabic. You would hear how awesome the campers sounded in drum circles led by percussionists, Bill Serfass and Nathan Foster. Our campers quickly learned a lot about rhythm!

When Pastor Murr of the Bethel Mennonite Church, our hosts for the week, heard that our theme was "Drums, Dances, Drama and Dreams of Peace", he thought he might have to work from home to get some quiet. But he was impressed when campers performed with Marnie Jones, who told us about her Peace Corps work in Africa. She helped some campers dress like an African bridal party and our 'band' gave them the gift of primitive music using Marnie's wonderful hand-made instruments. Drums are the most ancient cross-cultural form of communication across distances...the first cell phones! We borrowed a huge rain/frog drum from Fred Fisher, who brought it back from one of his trips to help people in third world countries. Camp Co-Director, Ann Griffith, showed us how to make the sound of a rainstorm using this special drum and our own hands and feet. We read a book about animals that were fighting and invented a new ending for the story. Directed by Ann Griffith, the 'animals' performed their peaceful version of the story for their parents, against a beautiful Serengeti mural created by a camp parent, Mary Moores.

I wish this newspaper had a video button and you could see our dancing, another form of cross-cultural communication for celebrations, prayers and courtship. You could see the way the word 'peace' is formed in sign language using the words 'become' and 'still'. We were blessed to be joined by a talented sign language teacher, Tanya Smith, who - along with Kayla Sivi, a junior counselor, and three signing campers - taught us that spoken words are not the only way to communicate. They showed us the beauty of words formed by hands. Tanya taught us to sign the song, "Let There Be Peace on Earth and Let It Begin with Me".

We saw pictures of children who were born in Gettysburg but now live in the United Arab Emirates. They look different in their Muslim clothes but they are just like kids here and everywhere. Ann Griffith taught us about Native American culture through her portrayal of Mary Jemison.

We learned that peacemakers could be people like us. Dave Crowner told us about Project Gettysburg-León, a partnership between the people of Gettysburg and of León, Nicaragua. Quaker activist, Dick Wood, told us about his family's medical relief efforts over the years in countries all around the world. He said, "You can be a peacemaker everyday, anywhere."

We heard the story of little Fadu and her mother who started "Petals for Peace" to raise awareness for religious toleration. Hiroko Rubin taught us how to make origami flowers and drinking cups. We talked about how dreams and prayers for peace can be sent on the wings of a kite or in coloring a geometric mandala.

ICPJ has already begun planning for Peace Camp 2010. Watch for information in our newsletter, at [www.icpj-gettysburg.org](http://www.icpj-gettysburg.org) or write to us at [peacecamp@icpj-gettysburg.org](mailto:peacecamp@icpj-gettysburg.org).

*Mary Gemmill, along with Ann Griffith, served as co-director of Peace Camp 2009. Mary is one of founding 'mothers' of the Interfaith Center for Peace and Justice, and currently serves as the clerk of Menallen Friends Meeting in Biglerville. She is an active volunteer for the American Red Cross, Head Start, the Adams County Library and Collaborating for Youth.*