

## **Stories from Peace Camp - The Color of Peace by Lea Czar**

*"Walk and touch peace every moment... Kiss the Earth with your feet. Bring the Earth your love and happiness. The Earth will be safe when we feel safe in ourselves"*

These words from Thich Nhat Hanh inspired 40 Peace Campers and 17 teen counselors who spent a week in June growing their own peace and sharing it with others. Since 1988, Peace Camp has been part of ICPJ's mission to promote awareness and activities related to peace and justice. We called this year's camp "The Color of Peace."

Guided by camp director, Mary "Koko" Gemmill, we began by focusing on self-awareness and inner peace. Koko spoke with the children about managing anger and exercising self-control. She led us in guided meditation sessions. Hiroko Rubin taught us calming yoga exercises. We swaddled ourselves in sheets to rediscover the sense of security we felt as babies and gave each other foot massages - sending some of us into ticklish giggles!

In a marathon of detailed tracing and cutting, Sally Crist and Donna Brewer created silhouettes of campers. These expressive portraits highlighted each child's unique beauty. Artist Annie Byrne worked with the children on creative projects, teaching them that art is another way to grow inner peace and share it with others.

Throughout the week, we met peacemakers Mary Furlong, Fred Fisher and Rukhsana Rahman who told us about their efforts to spread peace throughout the world. We also met Rosie Bolen of Adams Unity Coalition who spoke about confronting hatred and prejudice here in our own community. Campers wrote messages of peace on paper strips to create the first links in a unity chain. During unity events on June 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, community members added to the chain, now displayed at the YWCA

Putting into action what we learned, campers took a "kindness walk" through downtown Gettysburg to spread peace, giving small gifts, notes or hugs to people we met, letting them know we care about them and value the work they do and asking them to 'pay it forward'.

We talked about our diverse heritages, discovering that we have ancestors in common all over the world. Campers divided into 'tribes' to learn about peaceful societies including Tahitians, the Piaroa of Venezuela, the Zapotecs of Mexico, the Lepcha people of Nepal, the African Ju/'hoansi and the Amish. These societies demonstrated that civilization in harmony with itself and the earth is possible.

On our last day, we "kissed the earth with our feet", hiking to Spangler's Spring where Eddy Rubin from Strawberry Hill talked to us about finding peace in nature, echoing Thich Nhat Hanh's pledge to develop a sense of compassion in order to love and protect the earth's people, animals and plants.

We are grateful to the many adult volunteers and our teen counselors – heroes to the campers – who contributed to a wonderful Peace Camp experience.

### **Potluck/Concert with Tom Jolin and Jörg Geschke**

You're invited to a potluck/concert **TOMORROW** at the Fairfield home of John and Chris Kellett. Please bring place settings for your family and a dish to share for the potluck at 6pm followed by the concert at 7pm. Tom Jolin is hosting Jörg Geschke, a German folksinger visiting the U.S. Jörg's performance will be complemented by music from The Barnstormers (Jolin and Slim Harrison). For details, call 334-0752.

*Lea Czar serves as chair of ICPJ's Board of Directors. Peace Camp is a summer tradition for her children, Ricky and Sazi. This year, Sazi attended as a camper while Ricky was a junior counselor and Mom helped out as a parent volunteer. Contact ICPJ at 334-0752, [icpj@icpj-gettysburg.org](mailto:icpj@icpj-gettysburg.org) or visit our website, [www.icpj-gettysburg.org](http://www.icpj-gettysburg.org). For information on Adams Unity Coalition, visit [www.adamsunity.org](http://www.adamsunity.org).*