

Dear Editor:

Close your eyes. Think back to when you were in elementary or middle school and heard those magical words, "Summer Vacation." It was euphoric, right? "Summer Vacation" meant freedom. It meant fun.

That certainly was my experience; however, now that I am a parent of four, "Summer Vacation" has a new connotation. My wife and I both work out of the home and so we, like many of you who are raising children in 2016, know that "Summer Vacation" requires advance planning. How do we balance our desire for our kids to be kids who may enjoy these wonderful months of unsupervised play, creativity, and fun with our need to, well, pay the bills and look after our children and their futures.

Children in Adams County are fortunate; there are a number of summer camps and child care opportunities. I am biased, but I believe that one of the best things we have here is Peace Camp, sponsored by the Interfaith Center for Peace and Justice of Gettysburg/Adams County (ICPJ).

For decades, a committed group of Adams Countians has organized a week-long experience that provides our kids with an education on crucial issues relating to peace, social justice, the common good, diversity, and the environment.

This year, the ICPJ Board would like to thank the 2016 Peace Camp Co-Directors, Denise Weldon-Siviy and Deysy Selgado (who has directed the camp for the last 3 years), for their careful and creative leadership of this year's Peace Camp, which focused on "Loving Our Neighbors: America's Refugees Past, Present, and Future" from June 6-10.

We would also like to thank the musical director, Ricky Czar, a Peace Camp alum himself, as well as the following presenters: Mary Gemmill, Kayla Siviy, Elizabeth Strauss, Rukhsana Rahman, Loretta Baryeh, and the band Cormorant's Fancy. These talented and devoted Adams Countians, along with junior counselors, parent volunteers, and ICPJ Board members, gave our 56 Peace Campers a week they will not soon forget as they presented the cultures and customs of the Pilgrims, the Jewish people, and refugees from China, Africa, the Middle East, and Ireland.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Fairfield Mennonite Church, who provided a venue for Peace Camp this year, and to the Notre Dame Club of Gettysburg, the McSherrystown Home Association, and several anonymous donors for offering financial support.

One way to assess the health of a community is to look at how that community provides for its children. Anyone who came by Fairfield Mennonite last week and listened to our kids' articulate strategies for welcoming others while they completed crafts, played games, read stories, danced, sang, and laughed would join me in giving all those involved in Peace Camp 2016 an A+.

Please visit the Interfaith Center for Peace and Justice at our website (icpj-gettysburg.org) or on Facebook (ICPJGettysburg). And have a peaceful summer!

Charles Strauss

ICPJ Board Member and Chair of Peace Camp 2016