

SYNAGOGUES & CONGREGATIONS

Temple Israel and Interfaith Camp Continue to Impact Children's Lives

Sometimes in the wake of devastation, astonishing things arise. The terrible tragedy of 9/11 inspired the creation of the Elk Shoals Interfaith Camp.

The Camp, which began in 2002, brings together Jewish, Christian and Muslim children to live, to eat, to play and to learn together. The idea is to teach children that in reality we are all the same. "We decided that children need to be taught they can live together in peace and harmony," said Pete Parish, a Methodist minister and the director of Elk Shoals camp. "The idea was just ... maybe we'll get some of the prejudice out of them, or get to the children before the prejudice gets instilled."

This summer will be the sixth year for the Elk Shoals Interfaith Camp. There will be a session for boys from July 28-August 1, 2008 and a session for girls from July 20 through July 25, 2008. The



Jason Cathcart (center, rear) with nearly 20 campers at TI Interfaith Camp at Elk Shoals.

and knelt on the ground during the Muslim prayer. It was inspiring to see how these young campers were open to new experiences."

The internationally acclaimed film TRUST ME, available at the Levine Sklut Judaic Library and Resource Center, documents the success and trials of the first season at Elk Shoals. This documentary has been shown on Showtime, Hallmark and PBS.

There is no cost to participate in the Elk Shoals Interfaith Camp. According to the camp philosophy, the organizers say "you can not put a price on peace." Spaces are still available for the 2008 season of the Elk Shoals

Interfaith Camp. In addition, the camp is still seeking high school or college-aged students to volunteer as counselors. If you are interested, please contact Temple Israel at 704-362-2796 and ask for Toni Kendrick. ☆

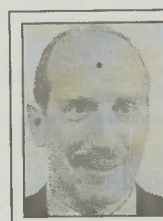


Having fun at TI Interfaith Camp at Elk Shoals.

camp is set in the beautiful mountains of North Carolina on the scenic New River, just a few miles from West Jefferson.

Debby Block served as a counselor for the camp the last two years. "What I found amazing was that, even though the camp is short—less than one week—the activities gradually break down the barriers of separation. It was amazing to see the campers move from segregated groups to one united community." Part of the huge success of the camp is built on a series of team-building activities. While you find the usual camping activities like fishing, tubing and archery, the camp also features a ropes course, planks course and, finally, the Trust Fall. For the Trust Fall, camper have to stand on a five-foot platform and fall straight back into the arms of their fellow campers. It is a scary exercise for many of the campers, but this activity seems to collapse many barriers.

Every day each group has prayers. The Muslim campers pray five times a day, the Jewish campers pray two times a day and the Christians have a prayer circle twice a day. At the beginning of the week, each group is totally separate, but as the week goes on, each religious group has the opportunity to watch and/or participate in the others' religious practice. "During the first camp, in 2002, the Jewish boys came over



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