

Senior works as missionary in Asheville

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Staff Writer

For most of us, when we think of doing missionary work, we think of far off places such as Africa and India.

But how about Asheville, NC?

This past summer, Cortney Robinson, a senior Teaching Fellow, worked as a summer missionary through Buncombe Baptist Association in Asheville, NC.

Through this position she took part in local missions with children where she conducted a choir camp, lead devotions and a youth group, took children to camp and spoke at various meetings and churches about the work she was doing.

However, her main job was to teach groups of children at camps in Asheville city parks.

Robinson taught in three out of five available camp locations. Each week she worked with anywhere from 20 to 100 children who stayed at the camp from 10:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m.

Robinson and a team of other workers worked from 10:30 a.m. until 12 p.m. each day, giving out snacks, doing craft projects and sharing Bible

stories on the life of Jesus Christ with the children.

According to Robinson, the knowledge the children had about Jesus was either non-existent or, "they thought that he was like superman," she said. This surprised Robinson, who coming into the job, assumed that most children had heard of Jesus.

The first day on the job, Robinson went to a camp called Shiloh where the children "began to warm up to the team and share personal information."

It was the personal information that was one of the most difficult parts of Robinson's job, but also the part that helped her grow closer to the children in her camp.

"One little girl named 'Tink' told me that she was the child-care provider for her two, one-year-old sisters from 5:30 p.m. until 12 a.m.," said Robinson. "'Tink' was only six years old."

"Many of the kids told us about having to sleep on the floor in the back of their houses because the bullets came through their bedroom windows at night," said Robinson.

Because many of the chil-

dren were also malnourished, Robinson's team tried to bring as much food as possible each day.

Atlanta Bread Company supplied them with enough food to feed the children all week at Robinson's camp as well as those who came to the local site for Meals on Wheels.

"One child had never seen an apple before, and [she] asked me to take the wrapper off of it for her. She meant the peel. She thought it was candy because it was so sweet," said Robinson.

"I have had lots of experience with children in schools already, but nothing could have prepared me for what I saw this summer," said Robinson.

Reflecting on her experience, Robinson says she feels a stronger bond with the children in Asheville. As a Teaching Fellow who will have her own classroom in a few months, Robinson knows that her time



Senior Cortney Robinson worked with children in Asheville, NC, teaching Bible stories and building relationships at day camp.

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working with the children through the camps has broadened her perspective.

"I always had heard that you can be a missionary anywhere. I don't think I realized that until now," said Robinson.

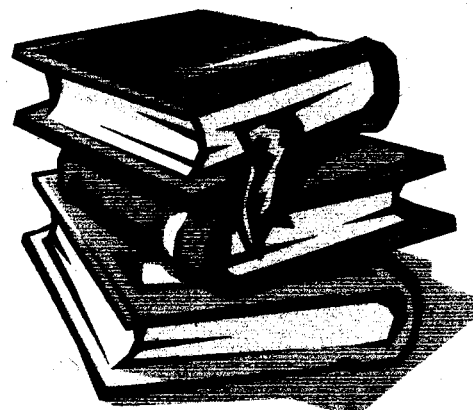
Robinson said that at first she was less than enthusiastic about working in Asheville for the summer.

But in retrospect, Robinson says that once the friendships began the children learned to love her, and she began to love them. And that is a life experience she encountered in what seemed the most unlikely place.

As for Robinson next summer?

"I'm going back again," she said.

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