

**VIRGINIA/CAROLINA FAMILIES ENJOY CAMP-OUT  
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What do you get when you combine 27 boys and girls with 23 young men and women, together with parents and other adults, bring them together for two days, add water and sun, and mellow them over a campfire? In a word—fun. As one young woman put it, “I’m just having complete fun. Nothing’s negative and I’m not feeling stressed out. Even the parents are having fun.”

They came together from all over the recently formed Virginia/Carolina Region for a Boys and Girls and Youth Family Camp June 16–18 at the 4-H Educational Center in Jamestown, Va., to sleep (maybe) in cabins, and join together in an intimate family festival and encouragement in faith. The motto of the 4-H Club is “Head, Heart, Hands and Health,” which seemed to coincide neatly with the theme for the event, “Raising the Next Generation of Disciples.”

On Saturday, everyone was divided into four teams for activities that included fishing with a seine net in the James river, a teamwork exercise with ropes, water polo and swimming in the pool, and a name game, where each person had to guess the name taped on their back. The names ranged from Nichiren Daishonin and the presidents of the Soka Gakkai to Barney the Dinosaur.

A 4-H camp counselor noted the uniqueness of the group, and was particularly impressed by the ethnic diversity. Another counselor observed that “this was a really great group that worked together, and they all got so excited when they got through [the ropes]. The teamwork was wonderful.” More swimming, tie dyeing, an outstanding game of soccer and a bonfire, complete with s’mores, musical entertainment and ghost stories, topped off a rather full Saturday.

The outing closed, on Sunday, with outpourings of shared sentiments from the young participants, such as “I didn’t know I was going to have so much fun,” and “I didn’t want to come here but I’m glad I did, and I hope to see everyone again next year.”

The parents at the event were reminded of the importance of the Boys and Girls group, not only for the children, but for all of us, by bringing us together in such a relaxed, family atmosphere. For many of us, this weekend will inspire us to reflect even more how to connect the next generation to the SGI and President Ikeda.

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