

REPORT FROM CAMP AGAPE



Sarah Long wanted to make certain the first impression of kids coming to Camp Agape in Denton would suggest fun and not banishment for a week. So she wrapped neon bright green and yellow streamers around the registration signpost and nearby trees, and then stepped back to await their arrival.

Sarah's one of the counselors who's on duty 24/7 this week at the Diocese of Easton's first effort ever to tell some hard hit children they're good people, that God and we love them, and Agape will be a fun and learning place for seven days.

They began arriving early Sunday afternoon, August 12. Parents and guardians of several who had planned to be there had to cancel for legitimate reasons at the last moment, dropping camp enrollment from 18 to 12. Penny Morrow (St. Paul's by-the-Sea, Ocean City) and Margie Sullivan (St. Alban's, Salisbury), the two women who have contributed countless hours to setting up Camp Agape, took it all in stride.

Statistically, these dozen kids face dismal odds of growing into normal adulthood. At least one of their parents is in prison. Among those at the camp this week, the statisticians say 8 or 9 will also wind up behind bars. That's why the thousands of dollars contributed by congregations and individuals are such an important investment. Maybe, just maybe, we can help to keep all of them out of jail. Or maybe, just maybe, we can keep *one* of them...

As soon as they were registered each of the campers sat for a portrait photo. At the end of the week, thanks to the use of the professional color printer at St. Andrew's, Princess Anne,

they'll be given photo albums of their activities, customized with each girl or boy's picture on the cover.

The picture taking was a learning experience. Some of the children were about to spend their first night away from home, and their apprehension was thick enough to cut. There didn't seem to be a chance in the world of coaxing a smile out of Langley, for instance. But as soon as this startlingly handsome boy climbed up on the stool he turned on a smile that would knock your socks off.



Langley, three other boys, and eight girls have now spent their first night in camp. They're swimming, learning archery, sleeping in bunk beds, gently hearing about God from chaplain David Dingwall (St. Paul's by-the-Sea), getting a bandage on a cut finger from nurse Carrie Connelly (St. Alban's), and being otherwise cared for by volunteers on close to a one-on-one ratio.

God has provided the wherewithal for this outreach ministry. Christians from throughout the Diocese are providing the hands. The reason is simple: We need these children to be among us throughout their lives, laughing some and crying some, contributing, teaching, showing, and with God's help defying the odds.

Reese Rickards
Camp Agape
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