

Jesse CORREIA's Spring Break Camp 2016

Dear Ones!

I am thrilled beyond words. We had the best and most exciting week plus teacher planning day that were filled with so many amazing activities. It was a joy to behold. This year, camp was expanded to two locations: Walker Ford and LeVerne Payne, and we doubled the number of campers who joined the fun.

The 105 youngsters registered were involved in a variety of sports activities including baseball, basketball, dodgeball and tennis was added. In addition, there were music programs, art projects, and age appropriate STEM experiments.

The most exciting thing of all was an outing to SkyZone, the new trampoline park, which was made possible by special donations from residents in our community. We were delighted that some officers from Tallahassee Police Department joined in our activities as part of their community involvement. You can see how fond the youngsters are of them in the SkyZone pictures.



Jumping! Tumbling! Launching into foam blocks! And bonding with our wonderful TPD officers!

Returning this year to teach special sessions were retired LCSO Major Carl Bennett to offer life skills wisdom, Tom Taylor to teach cooperative games, and Julya Denholm and her two helpers Patience and Magrathea, to teach non violent communication. One piece of wisdom Major Bennett has offered is that each of us is responsible for our actions and others are in charge of consequences for our actions. Both non-violent communication and cooperative games teach new skills that can be incorporated into our youngsters' daily lives.

Major Bennett's words of wisdom:



Major Bennett asks participants to tell him something he said during his talk. Their responses included: "Choose your friends wisely." "Stay away from drugs." "If you tell someone you'll do something, you have to do it." The Major responded that his dad told him that one and said that it has to do with your honor and people learning that you are someone they can trust.

Tom Taylor's cooperative games:



In introducing these games, Dr. Taylor listed the ground rules including being respectful of each person. He asked why respect is important. "Because we're all human beings", was one youngster's response. At the end of the session, Tom asked what they each liked best about the games. One young man said he liked the part where everyone took time to appreciate something about another

person. I wonder how often youngsters are asked to appreciate something about others they interact with. We can all learn from that.

Julya Denholm's session on non-violent communication:



Julya introduced lessons on breathing, relaxing and visualizing. After each segment, she asked the youngsters to imagine how each process can help keep a difficult situation from escalating. One participant confided how she had been so angry at life. She said that learning breathing and techniques for calming down have helped her turn her life around. Quite the testimonial to learning these self help skills!

Mayor Gillum visits during the carnival:



Friday afternoon was carnival day put on by the FSU Black Student Union and sponsored by Kingdom Life Tabernacle. This is when our Mayor joined us and spent time with our youngsters.



Monday was teacher planning day, and this year for the first time, we offered a full day of camp time for the youngsters. There was a pizza party and outdoors activities at Cascades Park. Truly a wonderful week for staff and campers.

Very touching to me is that our Mayor, Andrew Gillum, has been an avid supporter from the beginning. To see him take time from his schedule and spend it with our youngsters is special. I received the following note from him this week and want to share it with you. He says:

You and the Parks staff are AWESOME!!! Your seed investment has obviously been leveraged to create a world class experience for young people in our community who might not otherwise have exciting plans for Spring Break. Every kid deserves a break, without regard to their socioeconomic status. Thank you for your caring heart and consistent commitment to the youth of our city.

*Warmly,
Andrew*

What a week, and how incredible that you, dear friends, make this wonderful camp possible! Someone recently asked if I ever imagined my dream to honor my son would grow into this marvelous camp for so many. I had not. Nor would it be so without each of you. Your involvement touches my heart in a way that is life changing for me.

Know that your donations of any amount keep us growing. Please share this with others who may wish to participate. Donations may be made to Friends of Our Parks Foundation. Note on your check that it is for Jesse Correia's fund. Mail it to 912 Myers Park Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32301. This is a 501(c) 3 foundation, and your donation is tax deductible.

From my heart filled with gratitude, I thank you.

Martha Weinstein
Jesse Correia's mom