

# CATHOLIC STANDARD

A photograph of two young girls. The girl on the left has long dark hair and is wearing a blue shirt, smiling broadly. The girl on the right has long brown hair and is also wearing a blue shirt, laughing with her mouth wide open. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

## Summer fun

and faith  
in action

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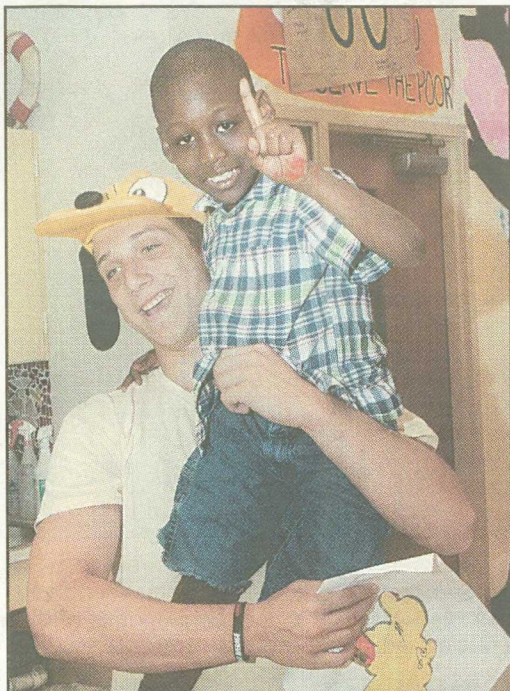
at Camp  
Good  
Counsel

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# Camp Good Counsel

For more than 40 years, summer camp at Catholic high school strives to 'impact the kids in a positive way'



Above, Jesse Linsenmeyer and his camper buddy prepare for music and dance time. Below, counselors lead a camper in jump rope.

The hallways at Our Lady of Good Counsel High School in Olney ring with squeals of delight and the sound of laughter and music and horsing around and genial chaos as young people charge from room to room.

Some are dressed like Disney princesses or like Tinkerbell, Goofy, Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters. They are enjoying a warm summer day filled with a variety of activities.

This is Camp Good Counsel, a five-week summer day camp founded more than four decades ago as a community outreach program of Our Lady of Good Counsel High School.

"We want to make sure we impact the kids in a positive way," said Tenisha Reid, a 2013 graduate of Good Counsel who is now employed as the camp's co-director. "We want the campers to be happy and to leave here with a smile on their faces."

Camp Good Counsel was started in 1972 by the Xaverian Brothers who sponsor the Catholic high school.

"The camp is central to Good Counsel's mission of service and provides a wonderful opportunity to live out that service in our own community," said Stephanie Wilson, Our Lady of Good Counsel High School's director of marketing and public relations.

The program is for boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 8 who are referred to the camp by their school counselors. Many of the children live below

the poverty level.

"The kids are chosen due to a variety of reasons, including their home situations or behavioral issues," said Joe Cabigas, a member of Good Counsel's Class of 1982 and now a biology teacher at the school.

Cabigas not only volunteered at the camp while a student at the school, but was its director for 10 years.

The camp offers swimming, arts and crafts, music and games, sports, field trips and other activities. The program is designed to teach campers how to get along with each other through the structured recreational activities. Free breakfast and lunch is provided each day by Montgomery County Food Services. All transportation is paid for by Camp Good Counsel.

"This camp is offered at no cost to the kids," Cabigas said. "This is an expense that Good Counsel gladly takes on."

Each camper is assigned their own student volunteer counselor who will stay with the child through the entire five-week program. Counselors are trained to provide encouragement and positive feedback.

Reid said that with the one-on-one arrangement, "the kids feel they have their own counselor."

"It is important that they feel they have at least one friend who will be constant every day they are here," Cabigas said.

Renatta Herndon Jones, Camp Good Counsel's other co-director, said the one-on-one relationship is "what makes this an innovative program. This makes

the program.

"This is a camp with no bells, no whistles, no technology," she said. "It is the relationship that is established between the kids and counselors that makes the difference."

That relationship, she added, "has changed the kids, and we can see it. We've had kids who come here who wouldn't talk, but are now playing with the other kids."

The one-on-one relationship also benefits the counselors. Sarah Moore, a 2013 graduate of Good Counsel, returned this summer as a staffer.

"I started (volunteering) as an incoming freshman and continued all four years," Moore said. "I love the community atmosphere and the bonds we form with the kids really means a lot."

Paris Clarke, who will be a junior at the school in the fall, was a first-time volunteer at the camp. "I expected this to be like any other day camp, but this is so much more fun. I really enjoy this."

In addition to building a sense of friendship among counselors and campers, the camp also encourages the counselors to form a bond among each other. Reid said that the camp hosts a once-a-week get-together for counselors where they can share their concerns and enjoy social activities.

Earlier this year, "Today's Catholic Teacher," a national magazine for kindergarten through eighth-grade Catholic school educators, honored Camp Good Counsel with its "Innovative Project in Total Community Involvement" award. The magazine praised the program as "a consistently wonderful experience for both counselors and campers."

For 8-year-old Stephanie, the camp is "exciting and fun. I like the sports and music and games."

Stephanie admitted that "I learned to swim and I won awards," and her favorite part of camp is "coloring, drawing and finger painting."

Molly Carbonell, who will be a Good Counsel sophomore in the fall and who served as Stephanie's counselor, said volunteering at Camp Good Counsel has become a family tradition. Her father, John, is a 1988 graduate of Good Counsel and also served as a volunteer at the camp.

Cabigas said that since the camp is more than 40 years old, "we have counselors who are the kids of counselors and campers who are the kids of campers."

"I have learned a lot about what making new friends is all about," Carbonell said. "I'm surprised at how much fun it is to hang out" with the kids at the camp.

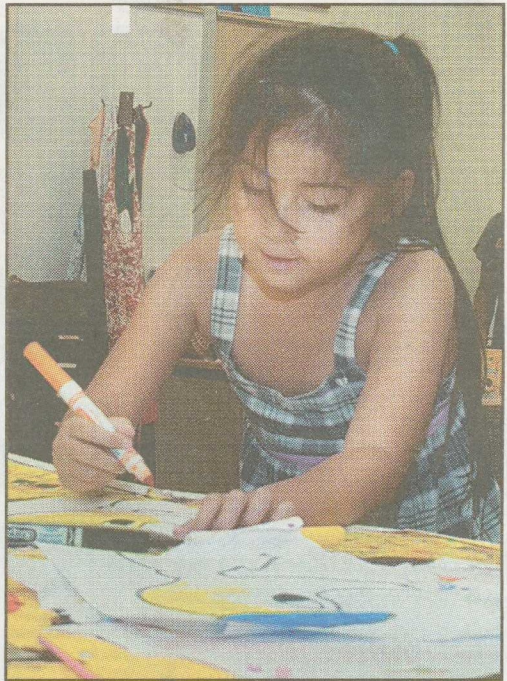
For Jesse Linsenmeyer, a camp counselor who will be a Good Counsel senior in the fall, participating in the annual camp "gives me a smile."

"I hope I mean as much to these guys as they mean to me," he said as he lifted his camper on his shoulders and headed to where music was blasting and dancing awaited.





Lady of Good Counsel students volunteer as counselors at the summer camp. Here they help a camper create his own set of Disney characters.



At left, counselors share a special moment with one of the 36 campers. Above, a camper enjoys her arts and crafts.