

# The Capital

## South County

### Junior ecology, new friendships on lesson plan at camp

By KAREN McLAUGHLIN, For The Capital

Making friends is part of summer camp. Making friends with the environment involves a long-term relationship.

South Arundel Citizens for Responsible Development, a nonprofit environmental organization, has been sending children to West River United Methodist Camp for the past seven years through its Junior Ecology program.

The program gives children from disadvantaged families the opportunity to swim, swing, climb and learn to be good stewards of the bay. Each year school counselors and local churches recommend children to be potential campers, and a community sponsor's \$320 donation covers each camper's expenses.



By Paul W. Gillespie -- The Capital  
Meagan Bailey dangles from a giant swing at the camp.

Through SACReD sponsorships, 25 children attended West River's Discovery camp this summer, six of whom attended last week with about 64 other campers.

Terry Nyman, SACReD's community outreach chairman, said the program is designed for "kids who really need it. The goal is to get kids to spend time on the water and expose them to other kids."

Meagan Bailey, 11, of Edgewater has been coming to the camp for four years., and her brother Curtis, 15, is a camp veteran.

During her first year she was intimidated by the rock climbing wall.

"But then I did it and I thought, 'That isn't so bad.'" She's been fearlessly scaling the wall every since. She's also conquered the camp's high ropes, which rise 50 feet into the air.

But the experience she most treasures has been her friendship with Jennifer Sale, 11, of Shady Side. Jennifer is also in the Junior Ecologist program and is grateful for the camp's opportunities. "I really appreciate (the sponsorship) because it's a lot of money for us to come here."

Curtis hopes to give something back to the camp next year, as a camp counselor for third- and fourth-grade campers. In his last year as a camper, he is savoring this week as a

vacation from his job at the Pier 7 Marina in South River.

But that doesn't mean he gets to sleep in.

Curtis gets up at 5 a.m. for fishing camp, where he's been reeling in rockfish and learning about bass fishing. Early in the week, his group caught 28 rockfish and two blues.

"The only thing I don't like about fishing," he said " is getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning."

Curtis may be an accomplished fisherman, but he has yet to try the swing. He admits that his sister "has more guts than me."

According to Andy Thornton, camp manager and director, all camps have a Christian aspect, including morning praise in the dining hall and small group Bible study. The camp also features activities and a nature center that promotes "stewardship of this area, of the bay."

The center's focus on the ecosystem is important to SACReD's chairman of the Junior Ecology Program, Pam Foster.

"Our group is supportive to the watermen an their lifestyle; they are the history of the bay," she said.

The camp blends these activities with traditional camp fare such as hiking, tubing, camp fires, a talent show and of course, s'mores.

SACReD volunteers believe that the camp offers children firsthand experiences that will promote connection with and respect for the local environment.

"The hope is that education and firsthand experiences will encourage a love of the bay and a desire to preserve it," Ms. Foster said.

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*Published August 15, 2005, The Capital, Annapolis, Md.*

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