

GLENDALE NEWS-PRESS

August 6, 2007

By Ani Amirkhanian

Fun and games make kids happy campers

Residential camp offers fun, activities and opportunities to underprivileged children from area.



Alexiss Harris, 11, bobs for apples at Camp Max Straus in Glendale Sunday afternoon.

A shower cap and bicycle helmet kept Kemocia Scott's hair clean and head safe as she tossed a hay bale with all her might.

The 11-year-old laughed with her friends who stood around her wearing the same head gear as they waited their turn to take part in the hay bale tossing competition.

"The point of doing this is to have fun and see how much strength you have," Kemocia said.

Kemocia was one of about 1,000 children participating in various activities at Camp Max Straus, on Sunday.

The Glendale-based residential camp, which is owned by Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters of Los Angeles, serves underprivileged children throughout the Los Angeles area.

"Camp Max Straus is for children who wouldn't be able to go to a traditional camp," said Margy Feldman, president and chief executive officer of Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters of Los Angeles.

"We work with kids with emotional and behavioral problems.

The [camp] experience is therapeutic."

On Sunday, youngsters met with visitors who came to show their support for the camp.

About 20 Wells Fargo Bank employees wearing red T-shirts paid a visit and presented the camp with a \$35,000 donation check.

They spent the day interacting and getting to know the campers.

"Wells Fargo believes in giving back to the community we work and live in," said Bryan Moeller, regional vice president of Wells Fargo. "We give of our human capital."

The bank has been supporting Camp Max Straus for a few years, Moeller added.

"We feel so excited to be here with the kids. This makes it real special for Wells Fargo team members to take part in camp and to see the kids' faces and smiles."

For many campers, attending Camp Max Straus is a longtime tradition.

Ashley Delgado, 12, has been coming to camp every summer since she was six years old.

"I like camp because I always see my old friends here," Ashley, a Whittier resident, said.

"I get time to calm down from all the stuff that is going on at home."

The seventh-grader likes horseback riding and swimming the most, she said.

Next year, she plans taking part in the Witherbee program, a Camp Max Straus backpacking and leadership development program in the high sierras.

When it comes to caring for farm animals, Mitchell Nemirovsky, a seven-year veteran of Camp Max Straus, has picked up a few caretaking skills during his stay at the camp.

After taking a dip in the pool on Sunday, Mitchell, of Oak Park, prepared to head over to the livestock area to look after the goats.

"I've learned that you can't scare them or they might go crazy," the 12-year-old said. "When you are feeding them, don't cup your hand. Goats can bite."

But leaving the two-week camp is bitter sweet for campers, including 12-year-old Afshan Bral.

The last day of camp is this Thursday.

"I like doing all activities and having fun," Afshan said.

"I'm going to miss swimming and the fun activities. All the cool stuff."