



(Far left) Father Philip J. Billotte, pastor of the Naples/Prattsburg Catholic Community and Family Camp spiritual director, blesses Joe Colucci at the conclusion of an outdoor Mass at Kamp Koinonia July 20. (At left) The Morris family, Jerry (from left), Lisa, Adrienne and Colleen, gather colored yarn from other families in an exercise in Unity.

Family Time

There's something for everyone during this weeklong camp

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ITALY VALLEY — It's a teen conference, children's Bible school and adult retreat all rolled up into one.

Every age group's spiritual life is equally prioritized at Family Camp, making people like Gordon Bennett keep coming back as he's grown from his teen years into adulthood.

"At first I thought I wasn't going to like it; I thought it was a little silly. But by the end of the week, it was amazing," Bennett said of his first Family Camp in 1985.

Bennett, now 22, became a camp staff instructor in 1988 and has fulfilled that duty nearly every year since. He coordinated a group of teen campers at the 1995 Family Camp, which ran from July 16-21 and July 23-28 at Kamp Koinonia in Yates County.

Speaking for the many teen and young-adult staff members at Family Camp, Bennett believes their most valuable role is showing other young people that discussing their Catholic faith can be "cool."

"(The staff) believe in God, go to church and pray. That's the best witness; they see nothing wrong with that," said Bennett, a parishioner in the Naples/Prattsburg Catholic Community.

On a recent July morning, members of Bennett's group were blindfolded and led around camp grounds by their peers. A discussion followed in which living in darkness was equated to living without love. Bible passages focusing on love, such as first letter of John 3 and first Corinthians 13, were quoted.

Meanwhile, other parts of the camp were seething with activity. As toddlers played in a sandbox, a group of young boys was splitting its time between arts and crafts and a lively game of "Bible Tag." The object, they explained, was to avoid becoming "it" by calling out a Bible-related name before being tagged.

While the younger set carried on at its frequently high-energy pace, adult campers all went off in pairs for a quiet morning of reflection as they walked the peaceful, scenic 296-acre Kamp Koinonia facility.

Yet Family Camp's philosophy does not totally isolate age groups. Much of the week also featured all-inclusive activities such as meals, prayer sessions, songs,



After being joined together by colored yarn, the connected families proceed to the site of an outdoor Mass to celebrate Eucharist with Father Billotte.



Benjamin Roy moves in for a closer view of the altar during Mass.

games and athletic events.

Family Camp began at Camp Stella Maris in Livonia in 1968 and moved 10 years later to Kamp Koinonia. According to Marj Smith, coordinator of the six-member Family Camp committee, this year's two camps drew a total of 23 families.

Most campers are from the Rochester diocese, but some have even traveled to Family Camp from out-of-state. The

camp is also open to people of all income levels, Smith noted.

"We have scholarships available. We never turn anyone away because of money," she said.

The camp lost one of its most dedicated members when Father David W. Mura, longtime Family Camp spiritual director and committee member, died in May. Yet the lively spirit which characterized Father Mura was still evident at this year's camp, indicating that many more Family Camps appear likely.

Father Philip J. Billotte, another Family Camp veteran, said the lack of everyday distractions at Kamp Koinonia helps breed the ongoing connection between campers and their families.

"These days you've got to eat in shifts. You're getting pulled in all these different directions, and sometimes families just don't have time to sit down and eat together. Here, you can eat together, sing together and laugh together," said Father Billotte, pastor of the Naples/Prattsburg Catholic Community and a spiritual director for this year's Family Camp.

Two young campers, Peter John Truni and Jason Krueger, agreed with Father Billotte.

"It's fun, and there are a lot of nice people here," said Peter John, 9, a parishioner at St. Michael's Church in Newark.

For Jason, 12, a parishioner at Rochester's Holy Apostles/St. Anthony of Padua Cluster, the best part is simply spending quality time with his family.

"You get to do stuff together and talk more," Jason concluded.

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ENTERTAINMENT

SATURDAY

Jeff Peden-Stilt-Walking Juggler - 10am
Black Mountain Cloggers - 11am & Noon
SageHeart Puppets - 1pm, 3pm & 5pm
North Coast Power Company
8 Piece Horn Band - 2pm & 4pm

SUNDAY

Jeff Peden-Stilt-Walking Juggler - 10am
Black Mountain Cloggers - 11am & Noon
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