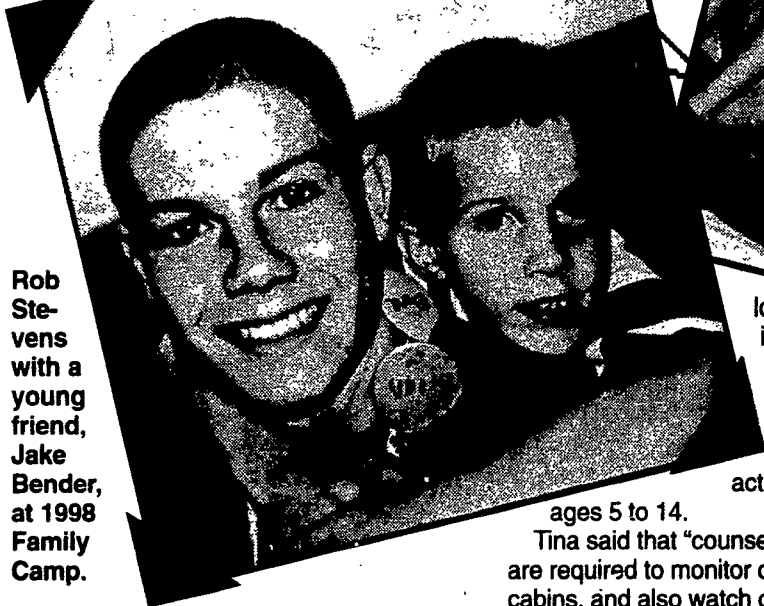


On the MOW

Shepherds of Summer

Rob Stevens with a young friend, Jake Bender, at 1998 Family Camp.



located in Livonia, Livingston County, offers recreational and spiritual activities for children

ages 5 to 14.

Tina said that "counselors in training" are required to monitor campers in their cabins, and also watch over campers while paid counselors attend meetings during the day.

Tina noted that she gained experience for this stage of counseling by serving as a "leader in training" last summer. While camping at Stella Maris, she assisted counselors with such activities as ball games, water sports, arts, nature walks and ropes course.

At Family Camp, meanwhile, each teen counselor is assigned a family for a week's period. The counselor works with that family's children, guiding them through such spiritual exercises as morning prayer and Bible study.

Rob noted that "imagination, listening, playfulness and flexibility" are important attributes for a teen counselor when working with children. A sense of caring is vital as well, he added.

"One of my favorite traits is 'huggability.' I always put this on my Family Camp staff application because I think hugs are so important," Rob said.

Rob's work as a counselor fits his outgoing personality, he said.

"God has given me the talents, gifts and most of all the desire to be with other people. He wants me to be a staffer, so I'm just doing what the big guy says," Rob remarked.

Karen said that her counseling experience enables her to reconnect with her own spirituality.

"It's not every day you sit down and think about your faith. But when you share it with others, it brings it all back for you," she said.

Karen and Rob gained exposure to the Family Camp experience by attending the

Karen Williams fondly recalls a 5-year-old girl who attended Family Camp last year with her mother and two brothers. The girl's father had died a year earlier.

"She was my little buddy. She never left my side," said Karen, 16, a parishioner at St. James Church in Irondequoit.

And Rob Stevens remembers the little boy who got a big lift out of the Bible sessions that Rob conducted at Family Camp.

"He explained to his parents that I had 'taught him about God,'" said Rob, 17, from Church of the Nativity in Brockport.

Such bonding experiences have prompted Karen and Rob to return this summer as volunteer counselors at Family Camp, a diocesan summer program located at Camp Koinonia in Italy Valley, Yates County. Karen and Rob are among numerous teens who share their time and talent with younger children at such places as Family Camp and Camp Stella Maris, not to mention vacation Bible schools in their neighborhoods.

Tina Gammariello and her cousin, Michele, will both serve as "counselors in training" this August at Camp Stella Maris, with the hope of becoming paid counselors next summer. The camp,

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"I baby-sit a lot, and I just love kids," said Michele, 16, from St. Patrick's Church in Macedon.

"I interact with them pretty well. I can get down to little kids' levels, people say," said Tina, 17, from St. Jude's Church in Gates.

Tina added that counseling provides good practical experience. "I want to work with younger kids in my profession, which I'm not sure of yet. I want to get a feel for it by doing this," she explained.

Michele said that although she's pursuing a medical career, she envisions a long-term commitment to volunteering with children.

"I know I want kids to be a part of my life," Michele said.

Karen is weighing a career in social work with underprivileged children, possibly working in adoptive services.

"I love little kids," said Karen, who, in addition to Family Camp, will be a volunteer counselor this summer for a two-week day camp at Brighton Presbyterian Church.

Rob said that counseling has helped him become conscious about outreach at all times, not just during the summer.

"I want to positively affect as many people as possible throughout my life," he commented.

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