

PARENTING

Happy hearts sing at Italian camp

By Liza R. Mugnolo
Editorial intern

PITTSFORD — Day camps can serve as a temporary relief for busy parents trying to keep their children entertained during the summer. But how many summer programs offer an educational opportunity for the children along with the fun and games, and an Italian, at that?

In cooperation with Rochester Italian Charities Inc., the Casa Italiana of Nazareth College offers an Italian Language and Arts Day Camp for Children.

The day camp, in its sixth year, offered two sessions: July 10-14 for ages 5 to 7 and July 17-21 for ages 7 to 10, at the Casa Italiana building on the Nazareth Campus. The Casa Italiana is a "house," or center, of Italian language, literature and culture for not only Nazareth students but also the surrounding community.

Judi Mazziotti, camp program leader, combines academic and heritage elements by teaching the language and culture of Italy. She begins the day with "circle time," when children sit in a circle and engage in half-English, half-Italian dialogue that involves open discussion, songs and language games.

In addition, a workshop for both parents and camp helpers was held July 8 to instruct parents on how to teach their children the Italian language at home. Mazziotti encouraged parents to provide a wide assortment of resources such as tapes, books, pertinent Web sites and labeled toys.

It's important, she said, "to keep the language and culture alive in their homes."

Mazziotti, of Buffalo, has a master's degree in education from SUNY College at Buffalo and is New York State-certified to



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Trina Langsenkamp and Janine Costello sing songs in Italian for their families during a performance at Casa Italiana at Nazareth College on July 14. The show was the culmination of a week of activities, where the children learned the basics of Italian language, food and culture.

teach pre-K through grade 12. Since 1980, she has taught Italian at the public Bennet Park Montessori School in Buffalo to as many as 600 children in a school year and has received several awards commending her teaching skills and knowledge of Italian literature.

Each year Mazziotti travels to Italy and, in turn, furthers her own knowledge of the culture for her students.

"Judi does a wonderful job reinforcing their Italian heritage as well as teaching their language," stated Maria Marconi, mother of 8-year-old camper Jenna Lyons. Jenna will be a third-grader at St. Joseph's School in Penfield, her family's parish.

Mazziotti feels that while many minority ethnic groups such as Native Americans are constantly providing heritage events for children, Italian-Americans often get overlooked. She said her aim is to steer children away from such Italian stereotypes as the Mafia and spaghetti, and to focus on genuine folklore.

"It's crucial that they understand more about Italians than what the popular media portrays," Mazziotti remarked. She feels it's important "to know who you are and to know your place in history."

Her program emphasizes Italian culture through such activities as geography and history lessons, music, art, folk dancing, theatre, puppetry, preparing ethnic dishes, learning family traditions, video taping, computer programs, storytelling and, of course, the ever popular European sport, soccer. Casa's Italian Language and Arts Day Camp uses Montessori teaching methods, allowing children to explore their particular interests hands-on as a means of self-education.

Children are strongly encouraged to draw, paint, sing and write in journals daily, in Casa's lower level LeChase Lounge, where images of Italian artists, composers and historical figures line the walls.

"Art is so important to learn about," said Elisabetta D'Amanda, one of the camp's assistant directors who also has two of her three children enrolled in the camp. D'Amanda also teaches Italian at the University of Rochester. "Italians are accustomed to living around beautiful art."

"This is a unique program in Rochester," said Teresa Murano, assistant director of Casa Italiana. She mentioned that, although most of the kids are of Italian descent, every nationality is welcomed. "It's open to anyone who wants to learn the Italian culture."

Rochester Italian Charities Inc. established an endowment fund in 1993 for the Casa's first Italian cultural camp for children. The organization, founded in 1964, offers scholarships for the children of families making under \$25,000 annually.

Many of the camp's participants come back the following summer, according to Mazziotti. Those who have graduated can become junior counselors.

Mazziotti said she will continue devoting her life to enriching young people with quality programs on Italian heritage that will embrace "the richness and dignity that the culture deserves."

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Family Events

© JULY 20-30 — Play: "Dr. Cook's Garden", Bristol Valley Theater, 151 S. Main St., Naples; Wed., Thurs., Sun. 2 p.m.; Thurs., Fri., Sat. 8 p.m.; \$20 adults, \$18 seniors, \$10 students, \$7 children; 716/374-6318.

© SAT, JULY 27 — Magic show: "Comical Magic", Gleason Auditorium, Monroe County Central Library, 115 South Ave., Rochester; 7 p.m.; 716/428-8150.

© JULY 27, AUG. 3 — Concerts: July 27: "The Blue Groove"; Aug. 3: "The Crazy Firemen"; Sagawa Park, Erie and Main Sts., Brockport; 7-9 p.m.; free; 716/637-3984.

© JULY 28, AUG. 4 — Cool Kids in the Park: July 28: "Movida & Little Legs"; kids teach Caribbean, Meringue and African dance; Aug. 4: "Mambo Kings"; Latin band; Sagawa Park, Erie and Main Sts., Brockport; 7-8 p.m.; free; 716/637-3984.

© SAT, JULY 29 — Laser show: "U2 Laser", Strasenburgh Planetarium, 657 East Ave., Rochester; 10:15 p.m.; \$6; children under 5 not admitted; also Aug. 5, 12, 19, 26; 716/271-4552, ext. 411.

© JULY 29-30 — Historical reenactment: "Professor Amos Eaton and Cookie"; history of the Erie Canal; presented by Rochester Museum & Science Center Players; Oswego Harborfest; 15 minute performances 11 a.m., noon, 1, 2, 3 p.m.; free; for information call Vicki 716/271-4552, ext. 311.

© WED, AUG. 2 — Bag puppet crafts; at Children's Center Secret Room, Bausch & Lomb Building, Central Library, 115 South Ave.; 2:30 p.m.; Call 716/428-8150 to register.

© AUG. 4, 11, 18 — Family fun: "Contraptions Fridays"; enjoy inventive games in conjunction with Contraptions A-Z exhibit; 26 mechanical gizmos on display; Strong Museum, One Manhattan Sq., Rochester; 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; \$6 adults, \$5 seniors/students, \$4 children 3-17, under 3 free; 716/263-2702.

© THU, AUG. 10 — Movie: "Stuart Little"; Highland Bowl, Highland Park, South Ave. near No. 12 School, Rochester; sponsored by Monroe County Parks Dept.; at dark; free; 716/256-4956.

© THRU AUG. 13 — Festival: recreation of 16th Century England; story telling, puppet shows, live jousting, Theatre of Fools, the Maze, games, foods; Sterling Renaissance Festival, 15385 Farden Rd., Sterling; Sat. & Sun. only; 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; \$15 adults, \$6 ages 6-12, under 5 free; 800/879-4446.

© AUG. 15, 16, 17 — Family program: "Search for Gizmos A-Z"; investigate contraptions and uncover the answer to a secret riddle; Strong Museum, One Manhattan Sq., Rochester; 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; \$6 adults, \$5 seniors/students, \$4 children 3-17, under 3 free; 716/263-2702.

© SAT, AUG. 26 — Presentation: "A Circle of Friends"; relive Rochester's involvement in the Underground Railroad before the Civil War; presented by Rochester Museum & Science Center and The Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery; Mt. Hope Cemetery North Gate House, 791 Mt. Hope Ave. opposite Robinson Dr., Rochester; 10-11:30 a.m.; also Sept. 30; Oct. 21; \$10 adults, \$5 children 3-18; for reservations call 716/271-4552, ext. 342.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER
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Leadership Days
2000

August 16, 17, 18

N.Y.S. Chiropractic College Seneca Falls, NY

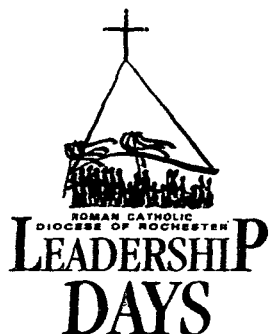
FEATURING

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- Overnight accommodations are available on campus
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For more information or to register for Leadership Days, please contact Parish Support Ministries at (716) 328-3228 or (800) 388-7177, ext. 342 or email weinzier@dor.org by August 4.