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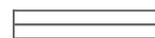
CENTER STAGE MINISTRY: Arts camp in Fort Worth

By Kambry Bickings

Buckner News Service

FORT WORTH-Rather than offering children a week spent at camp away from home, Buckner Benevolences, Broadway Baptist Church and the Booker T. Sparks School for the Performing Arts brought a camp experience to more than 100 at-risk children.

The three-week, all-day arts camp, held in the hot summer heat, offered children ages 8 to 18 exposure to the performing arts and a chance to participate in acting, dance, music, voice and technical theater classes, all designed to impact the artistic and social development of each participant.



“There is little room left in a school educators' busy and focused learning plans for the emphasis on the arts, creativity and the development of basic social skills,” explained Scott Waller, Buckner program director for community services. Buckner and Broadway work year-round in a ministry partnership.

“Various genres of music and dance provide an excellent vehicle for encouraging and developing a cooperative spirit among participants,” he said. “This camp allows children to explore their own creative voice and develop confidence in the validity of their own self-expression.”

Broadway Baptist Church provides a place for a Buckner-sponsored after-school program for children ages 6 to 12 in the Pennsylvania Place apartment complex, located next to the church. Last year, Broadway and Buckner contracted with Booker T. Sparks to offer weekly dance and drama classes for teens from Pennsylvania Place. After last year's success, Booker T. Sparks approached Broadway this year about hosting the more comprehensive summer arts camp.

“We saw an opportunity to serve both the children of the Booker T. Sparks program as well as our own kids from Pennsylvania Place,” said Dan Freemyer, Broadway's director of community ministries.

Each morning of the arts camp, the halls of Broadway were filled with the voices and music of children rotating among four arts classes—music, drama, dance and theatrical arts.

The city of Fort Worth's free lunch program, which also sponsors the arts camp, provided lunch each day.

The afternoons featured a spiritual development class, combined with the opportunity for each child to re-visit his or her favorite arts activity.

The camp culminated with a performance featuring camp participants of excerpts from the Broadway musical “Fame.”

Artistically and spiritually, the summer arts camp provided children and youth a chance to learn more about themselves, their interests, and the way God created them, Waller said.

“Arts education helps students by initiating them into a variety of ways of perceiving and thinking. We try to connect the child and the experience, helping to bridge the gap between verbal and nonverbal, in order to gain a better understanding of the whole person.”

Children enthusiastically rehearse a song at the summer arts camp sponsored by Buckner Benevolences, Broadway Baptist Church of Fort Worth and Booker T. Sparks School.

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