

FIRST UU IN PICTURES

Camp UU/Hogwarts casts a spell on First UU



by Headmistress Esmirelda McGonagall (aka Vicki Alstrum)

Campers and prefects experienced a magical week at Camp UU/Hogwarts in late July. As they passed Platform 9¾ and alighted to Hogwarts, they were greeted by Headmistress Esmirelda McGonagall and volunteers to a transformative week of fun. Children entering grades 1-6 enjoyed dressing in capes and hats and wielding wands as they participated in a variety of Harry Potter-themed camp experiences. Teens in 7th grade and above served as prefects, assisting the organizers and helping ensure the success of the camp.

Each day of camp began with wizard sports (quiddich or wizard chess) and a music session with the Maestra and the Professor of the Piano. This year's groups learned the songs very quickly—the practices were lovely. There was a moment later in the week where I was brought to tears by the beauty of their voices.

Campers acquired their wizard garb at Madame Malkin's and were placed into four different Hogwarts houses by the Sorting Hat. The rest of the week included classes in herbology, potions, wandsmanship, defense against the dark arts, charms, labyrinth, astrology, butter beer, and delectable delights. Campers also watched the Harry Potter films, went to a swimming pool, and enjoyed some bowling—where they even had a visit from a pet pig!

Several guests, both animal and human, facilitated the camp's social action activities. We created lunches for the ARCH program, made 20 fleece blankets to donate to Emancipet and Animal Trustees of Austin; made beautiful cards for the mothers and children staying at the detention centers; and created intricate labyrinths for the "comfort bags" the chaplain at Christopher House provides to families with a loved one in

hospice care. Our campers were also delighted with visits from a ukulele wizard (George Denny) and a pyromancy wizard (Malenko Loncar).

The grand finale of the camp was the Great Feast. The food was delicious, the music wonderful, and the skits most entertaining! In addition, the campers presented an enchanting musical performance during Sunday services on Aug. 2, and congregants enjoyed magical elements in Howson Hall and the gallery.

The campers and prefects were so enthusiastic about this year's Camp UU/Hogwarts! I so enjoyed seeing the ideas that the children developed to share with their families and professors, and was proud of how well the campers and prefects worked and played together and enjoyed one another's company. This camp is truly blessed with great kids, as well as invaluable volunteers who make the magic possible. ■