

## JACOB'S LADDER Summer Enrichment Camp Richard Bland College of the College of William & Mary July, 2017

### Nicole Pearson, Academic Director

July was incredible as always and continues to be the best month of the year for the Climbers of Jacob's Ladder. Sixty-three at-risk, intellectually gifted children attended the summer residential enrichment camp for the month of July on the campus of Richard Bland College in Petersburg, VA. Climbers enjoyed and more importantly seemed to benefit from the academic portion of the day at camp this summer. I was proud of the wide variety of classes we were able to offer in addition to the ever important core classes like English, Science, and Math. The best part about each class was the hands-on element. The teachers worked diligently to engage and challenge the Climbers on every level. All of our teachers are truly experts in their field, and I am so impressed each summer at the enrichment they provide. We have many ways to influence Climbers over the course of the month, but the exposure they gain in the classroom allows them to dig deeper into subjects they know and develop interest in new subjects as well. Subjects included: Creative Writing, Inventive Thinking, Storytelling, English Legos, Yoga, History, Origami, Ukulele, Art, Anatomy, Latin, Critical Thinking, Escape Rooms, Jumping Fleas & Frets, Chemistry, STEAM, Mathematics, Poetry/Dance, Leadership, Virtual Road Trip, Sign Language, Destination-Imagination, and Debate.

The musical this summer was a "roaring" success! We were able to put together an abbreviated version of the musical "The Lion King". It was our biggest musical to date, and I couldn't have been more proud. Thanks to some incredible art teachers, we were able to combine visual and performing arts for the very first time. Each Climber was able to

make their own mask to depict their assigned character. RA's helped with creating extra animals and basic set pieces. A few Climbers volunteered to work backstage and handle the distribution and changing of the wireless microphones (which takes a gifted mind for sure!). It was truly a team effort! This year, we were able to expand the performance to two nights – one night for the Climbers and one night for parents and visitors. The music was moving, lines memorized and delivered with emotion, and it all ended with a standing ovation and even a few tears that it was over. My personal favorite part was watching them take that moment for their bow. You see this realization of accomplishment and pride spread across each face. It is my hope that this realization sticks with them over the course of the year and encourages them to try more and be more in the other 11 months.



*The Lion King*

### JoAnne Ruffa, Camp Director

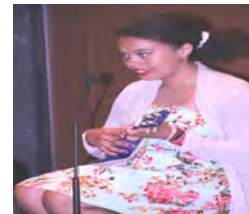
During the annual Spring Retreat, Climbers have the opportunity to decide on the upcoming theme for summer camp. "To Be Continued..." became the theme for the 2017 summer enrichment camp. We welcomed 14 new Climbers into Jacob's Ladder and look forward to including them in our

Advocacy/Follow-up activities this winter. A total of 63 middle school-aged youngsters enjoyed dorm life and campus activities at Richard Bland College. This was our second summer to be on the college campus where we took full advantage of the "water-garden classroom" and the refurbished barn theatre. Climbers continue "Planting Seeds of Service." Partnering with the Rotary Club of Tappahannock, we raised \$1000 to purchase a Shelter Box, which provided relief to those impacted by Hurricane Harvey. Climbers raised additional funds by selling lemonade to support children's cancer research. Eleven Senior Climbers graduated from Jacob's Ladder and entered high school in the fall.

*Science, Black Hole*



*Talent Show Ukulele*



*Shaving Cream Art*



**Palmer Castrodale  
Activities Director**

July 2017 was a month to remember. The Climbers stayed busy in their classes, swim lessons, recreation time, and lots of other activities. Our amazing team of Resident Advisors (RAs) led the Climbers in clubs such as Amazing Race, Mayan, Jeopardy, and Interpretive Movement. All enjoyed Jacob's Ladder's annual special events: Field Day, Christmas in July, Talent Show, and Coffeehouse. On weekends, Climbers had the opportunity to go on field trips to Richmond's Historic St. John's Church and Maymont. Senior Climbers broadened their horizons by seeing the play "In the Heights" at Virginia Repertory Theater. Our Climbers worked particularly hard this year to raise money for their end-of-summer points reward trip to Water Country USA! It was a splash! As always, we had an unforgettable summer together with our Jacob's Ladder family.

*July 4<sup>th</sup> Fun Time*



Jacob's Ladder is a pro-active enrichment program serving children who are gifted and at risk for over 26 years.



"For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord; plans for good and not for evil, to give you a hope and a future." – Jeremiah 29:11

**JACOB'S LADDER**

**Summer Camp Insights**

This summer I had the opportunity to teach a class on poetry and movement. We explored the similarities and differences between these two art forms and applied lessons learned from one into the other. Several Climbers had never written poetry before, and others had never danced, and all were excited to learn new forms of expression. They were encouraged to appreciate each other's creations; learning empathy and compassion while listening to their friends' words. Many were surprised by what they could accomplish, and a few shared newfound confidence in the importance of their thoughts. We also practiced skills in meditation and being quiet, learning how to take time to be still and not rush through life.

- Vaden Vosteen, RA/Faculty

*Field Day*



It is very hard to put into a few words the impact this program has on these children. In 2016 I made the transition from Climber to RA/Counselor and it opened my eyes to a different perspective of what this program does for the children who attend. The kids spend about 330 days out of the year waiting for camp to start back up in the summer because it creates experiences for them and opportunities they may never come across if Jacob's Ladder was not in their lives. This camp provides enrichment for these children but I also believe it has created a safe space for these children to let down their guards and tuck away those masks they have to wear at home and at school. At camp they embrace who they truly are and know they are not judged but simply accepted. These children build deep bonds and everlasting relationships through camp experiences. This

camp is comprised of adults who truly care about the happiness and success of the kids who come to it.

- Tatyana Turner, RA



**Jacob's Ladder  
25<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Classic**

In the spring, Jacob's Ladder will hold its 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Classic at the Golden Eagle Golf Course in Irvington, VA. Bring a friend to support a worthy cause. Details to follow.



**JACOB'S LADDER  
Oyster Tasting  
September 24, 2017**

Rappahannock River Oyster Company hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> Jacob's Ladder Annual Oyster Tasting at Merroir Restaurant, Locklies Marina on Sunday, September 24<sup>th</sup> to benefit the at-risk, intellectually gifted children served by the program. It was sponsored in part by Revere Gas and Lawyers Title/Middle Peninsula. Warm weather, delicious bi-valves, and loyal supporters continue to make this event an unbeatable combination. "Out On A Limb" provided their unique style of great music. Thank you, supporters of Jacob's Ladder!

**Jacob's Ladder Fast Facts**

- Celebrating 26 years encouraging intellectually gifted, at-risk students
- 339 Climbers graduated since 1991
- 63 Climbers, 2017
- 4-year commitment by families
- 50% rural, 50% urban areas of VA
- 27 teachers in summer program
- 18 resident advisors
- 4 weeks summer enrichment camp \$2,900 per child
- Year-round advocacy program \$1,325 per child
- \$4,225 per child for one year \$16,900 per child 4-year investment provided by Jacob's Ladder at no cost to families
- 94% of Climbers enter college
- \$12+ million in scholarships awarded to Climbers to date

*From all of us at Jacob's Ladder,  
Merry Christmas!*

