

Kids Have Tremendous Summer At Camp DREAM

“Of everything there was to do, they did it all twice!” said Lu Neuse, describing the enthusiastic 8-10 year old boys at Camp DREAM.

Neuse, the Camp Operations Coordinator and an Americorps*VISTA volunteer, spent this summer fishing, mountain biking, canoeing, kayaking, and frog catching with these 18 boys, and the 70 other girls and boys adventuring at Camp DREAM. 88 children from 9 communities around Vermont attended three or five day sessions.

The DREAM Program, a Vermont mentoring program, pairs college students with kids living in affordable housing communities. DREAM empowers children to recognize their options, make informed decisions, and achieve their dreams. This summer marked DREAM’s third year of hosting children on Metcalf Pond in Fletcher.

“Camp completes our year-round programming, providing activities when our mentors are on vacation,” said Mike Loner, DREAM’s Executive Director. “Mentors even spend part of their summers with their kids at Camp. 33 of them joined us as volunteer counselors during the summer. Thanks to funding from many foundations and individuals, we are able to host all of our kids and mentors at no cost to their families.”

Many children learn to swim and experience their first time in a boat or sleeping in a tent. “We certainly help kids through their homesickness, introducing them to new things. By the end of their trip, they don’t want to leave,” said Programs Coordinator David Anderson, also an Americorps*VISTA member. “Beyond providing new experiences for our kids, we integrate environmental stewardship in our programming, encouraging them to enjoy and protect a wilderness that they treasure. We partnered with The Farm Between this year to have chickens up at Camp and to bring kids down to the farm to see where some of their food was grown. Daily visits to the chicken run, discovering eggs, and visiting the farm were real highlights.”

With the help of an AmeriCorps National Civilian Conservation Corps, Camp DREAM grew leaps and bounds this summer. A new chicken coop, organic garden, well, electricity, road, and the beginnings of a lean-to and tree house were built. Next season, children will call the lean-to and tree house home.

To help with tree house construction or to sponsor a child to attend Camp, please contact the DREAM Office at 655-9015. Learn more about DREAM at www.dreamprogram.org.

