

## Planting Seeds Of Peace

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HARRISONBURG - Whether making prayer beads or navigating a labyrinth, participants in James Madison University's Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence's Peace Camp learned to think and act respectfully.

This summer's camp theme was "global citizens," bringing children together for talks on conflict resolution and social responsibility.

Peace Camp had 15 registrants plus five to eight children from the Boys & Girls Clubs of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, said camp director Madiha Patel. The organization gave Peace Camp use of its space at the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center this week, with the promise that club members interested in the camp's activities could join.

Camper Zeenat Habeeb, 8, said environmental responsibility is important to her and could be a form of community service.

"I like planting flowers, and I like watering them," the city resident said, drawing a picture of herself hanging up lights at the Islamic Center of Shenandoah Valley during Ramadan.

Earlier in the week, she learned to make a seed ball with clay, soil and sunflower seeds.

Camp counselor Kendra Christensen, a JMU senior, said the creations could grow almost anywhere and show the children the basic components needed for plant life.

"[What] we were trying to do was respect the Earth," the Connecticut native said about her lessons with campers this week.

They also talked about the ecological importance of bees and how "everything's connected" between nature and human beings.

"I think it's really good when they learn from each other," Christensen said. "Mixing the children's ages I think works really good, too."

Merriweather Annan, 6, of Staunton, drew a picture of her father's garden.

"Every Earth Day, my dad takes me and we get our wagon and collect trash," she said.

One of the older campers, Chris Meixner Guest of Massanutten, has come to camp since 2011 and said he wanted to help out this year.

Every summer, the 13-year-old said, peace campers behave as their name would imply and are told to celebrate their differences.

"Everybody enjoys themselves," he said while coloring with the group.

Chris and Merriweather said they most liked doing yoga with the group, while Patel said campers also took a stab at aikido, a form of Japanese martial arts, on Wednesday.

Children also took music and movement lessons because, as camp counselor Cristen Mitchell said, "learning to do things as a group and learning to do things peacefully" is important.

She was one of six students in JMU's Music Department to lead performance exercises with campers in the Simms Center auditorium.

"It's more movement than dance," said Annemarie Cartwright, 20, adding that the children also learned how to perform a song in sign language.

Keeping with the program's theme, Peace Camp was staffed mostly by JMU volunteers.

"It feels good to give back," said counselor Zachary Haga, 24.

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- Caption: Willen Kishbaugh, 7, of Harrisonburg, works on an art activity Thursday for the James Madison University Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence Peace Camp. The event was held this week at the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center. (Photos by Daniel Lin / DN-R) Ian Brantmeier (left), 7, of Penn Laird, plays a game Thursday with other participants in the James Madison University's Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence's Peace Camp. IMG>[http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article\\_images/55cd70ea-13d4-4cfb-8a5e-36360a932590/55cd713b-fde8-455a-a1d8-36450a932590.jpg](http://www.dnronline.com/files/uploads/article_images/55cd70ea-13d4-4cfb-8a5e-36360a932590/55cd713b-fde8-455a-a1d8-36450a932590.jpg) p/>  
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