

Camp Alianza



2007 BRYAN FELLOW

Hope Marasco

HOMETOWN: Durham, NC

MAJOR/DEGREE:
Master of Social Work, Class of 2008

PROJECT TITLE:
Camp Alianza

FACULTY MENTOR:
Mat Despard,
School of Social Work

COMMUNITY PARTNER:
El Centro Latino

PROJECT LOCATION:
Orange County

“The expressions of gratitude from the parents made me feel as if we truly accomplished something extremely worthwhile by creating this new service to meet such a pressing need for a number of working families in Orange County. This experience challenged me to stray out of my comfort zone and venture into a new area of program development.”



Camp Alianza served 17 elementary school aged Latino and African American children from Orange County, NC. The camp addressed the need for affordable, accessible, and high quality summer child care for working families of color.

Project Goals

1. Enhance cultural appreciation and friendships among elementary school-aged low-income Latino and African American children in Orange County.
2. Help Orange County's low-income Latino and African American parents of elementary school-age children maintain a larger portion of their household income.
3. Develop positive social skills among low-income elementary school-age Latino and African American children in Orange County.
4. Enhance the campers' understanding of basic concepts relating to violence and gang prevention, proper nutrition, fire safety, and other relevant topics.

Developing Camp Alianza was a challenge as well as a blessing for me. Initially, I struggled with how to make arrangements for all of the logistics that had to be hammered out in order for the camp to run smoothly, and once it began of course there were situations that arose that I had not been able to plan for in advance. By about the third week, however, the details were pretty much ironed out and the kids, counselors, and volunteers began to feel more comfortable and settle into the weekly routine. It was at about that time, midway through the camp, that my Faculty Mentor, Mat Despard, and his daughter, Rachel, came and did a three-day soccer camp with the kids. On the final day, the school set up an actual soccer field, with real soccer goals, painted lines on the field, etc. (It was actually for another camp that took place in the morning, but we were able to use it in the afternoon for our camp as well). At the end of the camp, we had a soccer scrimmage, which was an adults versus kids game.



The adult team consisted of my faculty mentor "Coach Mat", my community partner, Ben Balderas, who is the director of El Centro Latino, the two camp counselors, myself, and a former UNC women's soccer team member who Mat had invited to speak with the kids about her experience. The kid team consisted of all the campers, and Mat's daughter, Rachel. The scrimmage was a ton of fun (the kids beat us!), and it was neat to just cut loose and play. It was a neat feeling to know that I had had a part in bringing together all of those people to do something that so fun for everyone. I think this is a good example of how fellows can be creative with the kinds of programming they develop. Why not have a good time while providing a needed service at the same time?



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