

Sisters of Social Service

Rooted in the social teachings of the Church, we are sent to be pioneers



Celebrating nearly 90 years of working
with and supporting people on the
margins of our world through social
services and advocacy

Reflection on Camp Suzanne 2016

Thank you, thank you to all who kept Camp Suzanne 2016 and our families in prayer. During our first session on July 10th, we loaded a passenger van with nine children and three staff, and drove to northern California to visit their incarcerated mothers for 6 days. It was a long journey to Hayward, CA (8 hour drive), as we had several stops to pick up children along the way. We left North Hollywood at 6 am and the children were very tired and nervous to meet each other and their mothers. At breakfast, they started talking to one another and making new friends.

We arrived to CSU Eastbay in the late afternoon and the campers were excited to see where they were going to sleep for the next several nights. They each shared a room with another camper and stayed in suite-like rooms that included a bathroom and shower for every four campers. They also had access to a small kitchenette, living room and balcony with an amazing view of Hayward. They enjoyed stepping onto this balcony in the evenings and at night before bed.

It was beautiful and very touching to see the children reunite with their mothers on Monday morning. After many hugs, kisses, tears and more hugs, the mothers and children were able to begin their journeys to make a "Recipe Book" through a variety of art techniques. They worked on various recipes, like *Recipe for A Perfect Meal*, *Recipe for a Perfect Day*, *Recipe on How to Celebrate*, and a *Recipe on What to do When I Miss You*. The children and their mothers created beautiful Recipe Books together using different art media, like bubble water color, sketching through movement, paper folding, braided/beaded bracelet making, dance, pastels, stamping, etc. It was great to see the mothers and children be inspired through a variety of art materials. The conversation began and you could see the families start to bond and heal. They shared difficult moments in which the mother or child needed space to process their emotions and the art therapists from Loyola Marymount University did an excellent job in creating that space that allowed the healthy relationship building to happen. The families were truly grateful for the time they had together.

After the campers time with their mothers, they had time to play and be free. On the first day, we went to a play park and had popsicles and debriefed their day. After, they had free time to run and play games. On the second day we went swimming and the children had fun playing in the refreshingly cold salt water swimming pool that included a diving board and huge water slide. We had time in the evenings for many ice breaker games outside on the beautiful green grass, team building activities, and game nights. We also had a Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet teach Tai Chi and drumming. During the week, the Knights of Columbus from a parish in Danville brought us dinner to the university. That same day, Sr. Anne Carrabino's youth from the East Oakland Youth Alliance came and along with our camp counselor, Emily, led a Tie Dye Activity with the campers. After dinner, the youth took the children on a small hike, played games and Basketball with them until the evening. The children were thrilled and quickly made friends with Anne's youth.

I am so grateful to all who helped make Camp Suzanne 2016 a success. Thank you my dear Sisters and Associates once again for your support through prayers and conversation. Blessings of love and joy to you.

Blessings,
Sr. Naomi Cornejo, SSS

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