

YARMOUTH, ME, BEDFORD, MA & GREATER LYNN, MA

Partners Organize Summer Camp in Transylvania

BY DEAN A. MCKENNON

During early August, the Partner Church Committees of the UU churches in Yarmouth, Bedford, and Swampscott (Greater Lynn) again collaborated in organizing a three-day, two-night overnight camp in Transylvania. Twenty-seven children from the villages of Gyepes, Abásfalva and Keményfalva, where the partner congregations of the three U.S. churches are located, attended the camp. The villages are near one another in the Homoród Valley.

The three U.S. churches shared the cost and provided planning and leadership resources. Ann Swardlick and Barbara Trentacosta from the Yarmouth church and Lyssa Andersson and Dean McKennon from the Greater Lynn church comprised the planning team, which met twice prior to the camp start date of August 5. At the first session in Bedford, the team met with Sarah Dorer and Sharon McDonald, the Bedford people who had led the first camp in 2006. The Planning Team met a second time in Maine to finalize the arrangements.

The camp was located in the village of Lókod, where there is a foundation initially set up to provide orphans with a summer camp experience. That camp, which is now a year-round facility, is available to other organizations at reasonable rates that include lodging and accommodations. The indoor meeting areas, playing field, and playground and indoor game equipment made a variety of activities possible. The program schedule was divided into three periods each morning and afternoon. Craft projects such as making dream

catchers, puppet show preparation, outdoor games and free time filled the mornings and afternoons. Evenings were devoted to gathering around a campfire. At the second evening's campfire, marshmallows from the U.S. were provided for toasting. The closing event was a puppet show presented by the children for the parents and grandparents who had come to take them home.

Camp leaders from the U.S. were Ann Swardlick, Lyssa Andersson and Dean McKennon. Additional camp leaders included Rev. József Kardos, minister in Keményfalva, Icuka Bence and Rozália Cseke, teachers in Abásfalva and Gyepes respectively, and post-high school students Alpár Deák and Edzsébet Fulop.

Excluding air fares for the camp leaders from the U.S., the total cost of the camp was about \$2,500. Camp facility charges were about \$16 per person, adult or child, per day and covered meals and accommodations. The Partner Church Committees of the

three participating U.S. churches each contributed \$700, with the balance of costs met by donations from several individuals and church groups. Through the pooling of financial and other resources, it was possible to provide camp experience for about \$93 per child.

The children's enjoyment of camp was obvious. Parents' reaction was positive, as evidenced by a touching letter of appreciation which quoted poetry that a parent read at the camp's closing event. In discussion of whether a camp would be organized in future years, there was tentative consensus that a camp might best be held every other year. As a first step in ceding more responsibility for programming to local leaders, we asked Rev. József Kardos and teachers Icuka Bence and Rozália Cseke to serve as a local Arrangements Committee for 2010, and all three agreed.

All three of us from the United States shared the feeling that the benefits we received from the experience were at least as equal to, if not greater than, the benefits that the children received. ●●



The all-camp photo.



"Simon says..."



A card game



A craft project



Dream-catchers