

Vistamar

from front page



L-R Annie Cumin, Alina Heim, Jasmine Nyende, Hannah Anderson, Joseph Rosales, Michael Robinson, Chris Kent.

showed him the importance of staying connected to his friends and family. He added that more than 60 years later, survivors still keep in contact. “In the worst possible times, the only thing they had was their friends and their family,” Rosales said. “I learned how fragile life is and how important it is to make connections with other human beings.”

Exercises at the festival were designed to reflect the theme of using art to communicate. For one icebreaker exercise, students from different countries paired with each other. “For two hours, we took turns walking blindfolded while the other one gave directions,” Michael Robinson, 16, said. “You had to deal with things like crossing the street and going around curbs and ditches. It’s really a good exercise for communication.”

There were plenty of opportunities to create art in the form of music, poetry, drawings and skits. On the last night, students paired together in groups to put together an artistic presentation including sculpture, poetry and music. “Some of us are kind of more comfortable with drawing or sketching, some of us are more into music, and some of us are into writing, but we got to do everything,” Robinson said.

Jones said that each day was crammed with activities. “The days were really packed,” he said. “There wasn’t a lot of free time. We were basically going from nine in the morning to nine at night, so it was pretty packed.”

The festival included elements besides art. In one workshop, students collaborated to create their own declaration of human rights. Robinson said the exercise taught him the importance of self-expression and tolerance for other points of view. “What I learned most in that activity and probably the whole trip was that everyone has their own views on the world and how things should be,” he said. “If you give someone else the chance to talk and express how they feel without interrupting them...you can start to see how everything can work if we compromise.”

Jones said that all participants were required to be only minimally proficient in English to participate. Though that made communication more challenging, it gave students the chance to help each other. “One of the things that was fun to see was our kids not just teaching the other kids English, but also learning words in their languages,” Jones said. “Jasmine showed me her journal and she had written all these Slovak words and their English meanings. She told me she wanted to learn Slovak and I thought it was really cool.”

Rosales said the language barrier was intimidating at first, but he soon found it easy to connect to the other students and noted that everyone put in an effort to talk each other on the first day. “They understood

what we were saying most of the time, and we understood what they were saying,” Rosales said. “It was actually surprising how easy it was to connect.”

Jones said she and Kent were proud of how confident their students were and how much they invested themselves in the festival. “These kids were really, really open,” Jones said. “I didn’t get the sense from them that they would be bystanders. If there were lulls between activities, they would be the ones that would represent their groups.” She went on to characterize the trip as a great fit for the students given Vistamar’s academic philosophy. “I think it fits extremely well in terms of the mission of the school as being at home in the world, embracing diversity, being tolerant of others. It just seemed like a no-brainer for the school—a perfect fit.”

Vistamar Director of Advancement and External Affairs Debra Bronow said the school tries to promote a global curriculum by getting students to look beyond the classroom walls. “We’re always asking kids to cross boundaries in some way,” she said. “Whether it’s to travel, or just getting kids to try something new and take risks.” •

Herald In Virginia



The El Segundo Herald hiked up Mount Rogers in Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, a national park in VA, with Boy Scout Troop 94 (Charlotte, NC)

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