

G.R.A.C.E. Girls Enrichment Trip

On July 8th, fifteen G.R.A.C.E. girls and four leaders set out on the 4th annual summer enrichment trip. This year the destination was the Penn Center on St. Helena Island in South Carolina, an ideal spot to learn about the Gullah history and explore the coast.

We learned a great deal about this educational center, which was the site of the first African American school and center for many of Martin Luther King's meetings that led to the Civil Rights Movement. We listened to a Gullah Storyteller who drew the girls in with her stories of Africa and then used her words to validate their uniqueness and sent a powerful message about inner beauty and the danger of pop culture messages.

Our home for the weekend was a large, rambling house flanked by huge trees filled with Spanish moss. We prepared breakfasts and lunches there and had home cooked dinners at the Penn Center Cafeteria. We played games, created crafts, talked, listened, laughed and sometimes screamed (mostly at the sight of bugs!).

We spent a lot of time at the Hunting Beach State Park where the girls experienced the beauty of the coast-most of them for the first time. The girls spent their time in the ocean enjoying the waves, on the beach collecting shark's teeth, and playing in the sand. One day we packed a picnic and climbed the lighthouse, and then headed back into the ocean for more waves!

We started out the trip as a group of individuals and came home as a family. During our time together the girls let down their defenses, shared their stories, and gained a better understanding of each other. It was a powerful weekend and each of the adults felt privileged to be a part of it. Highlights for all the girls were the time spent at the house together and playing in the ocean.

Below are some quotes from the older girls about the trip:

"The whole trip was GREAT, but the thing I liked the most was when we went to the beach and tried to fight all the big waves. I loved it. THANKS FOR EVERYTHING!"

"I liked the house we stayed in because it has a very interesting history. And I also liked the storytelling at the museum. But the most important thing is that I would like to thank those who made it possible for us to be able to go and enjoy ourselves."

"The trip was really fun. We got to know each other and see a whole other side of ourselves. We also helped other people who were more of the quiet type even talk. But the most important thing was that we got along like one big happy family."

"I had a bunch of fun on this trip. It's funny how you haven't seen each other in a while and then when you do, you catch up...I met some people I didn't know. I learned some things I didn't know one of them is no matter what the skin color you have, we're all family. And we shouldn't base people on color. I would love to do this again. Vacation is fun!!"

Thanks to Grace Episcopal Church and to the members of our community who made this experience possible for the girls!

Lisa and Jennifer