

**METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO PHILOPTOCHOS
KIDS 'N' CANCER MINISTRY**

*Jeannie Ranglas, President
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**Kids 'n' Cancer- Camp Agape Report
September 2011**

Give your heart to a child.

The Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos Kids 'n' Cancer Ministry is one of the few organizations offering a complete experience for the entire family, rather than the cancer- afflicted child alone. The concept of *agape* is very inspirational as it brings people together in the service of our Lord, Jesus Christ. It is not a coincidence that we call our camps, Camp Agape, because it is the love and fellowship for those less fortunate that binds us together as a strong philanthropic organization.

The Philoptochos members through their Chapters provide for about half of what we raise for the Ministry. We also receive contributions from individuals who open up their hearts to support this Ministry. We are very grateful for this overwhelming support of the mission of this Ministry. The support for this Ministry also comes in the form of countless volunteer hours that are logged in by members from various parishes. Getting ready for camp is no small task and the fellowship that grows between individuals is truly a blessing. The biggest reward for the tiring hours put in by our volunteers is when parents and children have smiles on their faces, and love in their hearts. Many of them see camp as "a gift from God".

The Kids 'n' Cancer, Camp Agape ministry is responsible for the operating costs of five camps located throughout the Metropolis.

Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center- Dunlap, California
Camp Angelos, Portland, Oregon
All Saints Camp, Seattle, Washington
Camp Marston, Julian, CA
Camp Wamatochick, Prescott, Arizona

The cost per person for four days is approximately \$300.00. The camp population is represented by different ethnic groups and the main criterion to be eligible for camp is that the child has to be in active treatment. Most of the families cannot afford a vacation on their own. The benefit for the children and these families is truly priceless!

The Camp Agape experience is truly unique for both families and volunteers alike. The excitement begins when the families arrive at Camp. They are welcomed by numerous Philoptochos members who dress to depict the theme of the Camp for that year. Each year the theme at Camp is selected and T-shirts are made with special artwork depicting the theme for that year. This year our Camp Agape theme was *Race to Amazing Adventure*. The race car theme was accompanied by bandanas and race wear. One of the members made a model race car to scale that was transported to three of the five campsites.

Upon arrival, the families receive a day pack that consists of various toiletries for the entire family. The families get disposable cameras, flashlights, sunscreen, bug spray, toothbrushes and toothpaste, shampoo, and deodorant. They receive their T-shirts, sleeping bags for each child and a specially embossed Camp Agape blanket for the patient. Other gifts include hats with our logo on them, name badges etc.

The activities at Camp include a Spa, art activities, games, a Dance, called an *Agape Ball*, and Opening and Closing Ceremonies. An uplifting and inspirational message is given by a priest who is present at the Opening Ceremony. At Opening Ceremonies, the families each design a board that depicts what Camp and the world mean to them. They present the board with episodes from their daily lives which, gives those without the struggle, an idea of how these heroic people face life on a daily basis. In addition, each family member is presented with a backpack or a tote that has our logo on them. The children's backpacks are filled with school supplies such as composition books, calculators, staplers, water bottles, binders, colored markers and pencils, writing pencils and gift cards. The Mom's totes are loaded with items such as hairbrushes, binders for record keeping, deodorant, perfume, gifts and other toiletry items. Dad's totes are filled with shaving cream, deodorant, razors, shampoos and above all a gas card to cover the cost of transportation to and from Camp.

While at Camp the children receive towels for the pool, and toys at each meal. Some of the highlights at Camp are Talk with the Doc, Foam Guy, Bubble Man, visit to cat-haven, the pool and an Ice-cream social. We share the ice-cream hour with policemen, motorcycle riders, or firemen. Most of all, the families get to spend some quality time with each other participating in the activities provided by the Camp Staff. The Camp is filled with activities such as horseback riding, canoeing, archery, rock climbing, swimming and fishing. At most Camps, a Spa room is set up to provide for relaxation and healing. Massages and acupuncture are available for all our guests from volunteer professionals. The parents are treated to tea and cookies by our volunteers.

On the day of the Agape Ball, each family member has an opportunity to get a haircut, facial and manicure from volunteer professionals and are given items to

enhance their wardrobe for the evening. The moms and daughters make their own dresses, which is a truly creative endeavor. The party is lively with dancing and singing and a DJ hired specifically for the evening. For one evening, the families are able to forget their hospital visits and enjoy themselves thoroughly. Participation at this event is amazing with grown ups mingling with the kids, the kids dancing with each other and friendship and *agape* fill the room, which is specially decorated for the event.

At the Closing Ceremonies, a tree is planted or if there is a lake, carnations are strewn in the Lake by families and volunteers in memory of a loved one or in honor of a loved one. The flowers represent *Faith* that the children will overcome their challenge, *Hope* for the future, *Love* for each other.

The families and volunteers leave Camp with mixed feelings of joy and sorrow, joy for what has been a fun-filled, all-expenses-paid vacation for the families and sorrow that Camp had to end, but the fellowship between families is lasting. The families talk about Camp much after it is over and share news as they pass each other in the halls of the hospital, knowing that they are not alone in this struggle for survival. Doctors have informed us that the children's blood count increases after Camp and they are in better spirits to deal with the uphill challenge of this life-threatening disease.

The volunteers feel a deep sense of satisfaction that they have participated in an event that is so meaningful. They have had the privilege and opportunity to connect with the families and share some quality time with them, listening to their stories and providing love and compassion. It is truly a blessing and a privilege for all of us to share the Christian spirit of fellowship and love, by serving the Lord through Good Works. When you give your heart to a child you shine a light into their world and bring joy to yours.

With love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeannie Ranglas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

Jeannie Ranglas

President

Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos