

# BCMWorld

An Inside Look at BCM Global Ministries



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**BCM Camps – Summer Fun Leaves Lasting Impact**

# BCM Camps – Summer Fun

By: Lisa Biegert

Going to camp is a summer staple for North Americans. Countless adults remember with fondness being finally old enough to attend a week of summer camp. Away from home for the first time. In a cabin. Making new friends. Doing crazy things parents won't normally let you do.

Camp is also the time of decisions. Accepting Christ as Savior. Giving your life to full-time ministry. Making life-changing commitments. There is just something unique about being able to invest in a young person's life for six straight days—teaching, leading by example, and building a personal relationship.

BCM runs twelve camps throughout Canada and the United States, as well as many camps around the world. In fact, in almost every country where BCM works, camping is a major ministry. Approximately 25,000 children attend BCM camps every year. Their experiences range from traditional outdoor activities to camps specific to the handicapped or to provide a get-away to inner-city children. Family camps, day camps, and horse camps are also included in the list.

Camping affects not just the young people who attend. To be a counselor or any kind of camp personnel can have a lasting impact on one's life. Ask any BCM camp director one of the things they most look forward to each year, and they will answer, "The opportunity to invest in the lives of our volunteers as well as the campers and to see them learn and grow together."

We invite you to take a peek at what BCM's summer camping program looked like this year throughout the United States and Canada. Throughout this edition of BCM World, you will find an overview of individual BCM camps with links to click on for a closer look. Enjoy photos, stories, and testimonies of what God is doing through BCM's camp ministry. You will also find links to their websites so that you can get personally involved in these exciting outreaches.

# un Leaves Lasting Impact

## Camp Descriptions

- **Big Sky Bible Camp, Bigfork, Montana:** Founded in 1947. Big Sky runs traditional camping program, backpacking trips, and special needs camp. Camp director: Jamy Landis. **(Page 4)**
- **Bliss Summit Bible Camp, Bliss, New York:** Founded in 1977. Traditional camping program. Camp director: Patrick Barringer. **(Page 6)**
- **Camp Sankanac, Spring City, Pennsylvania:** Founded in 1941. Four weeks of boys' camp and four weeks of girls' camp, ages 7-16, with a different theme per week. Camp director: Josh Brackbill and Roy Schell. **(Page 8)**
- **Camp Sonshine, Honeybrook, Pennsylvania:** Founded in 1969. Traditional camping program. Camp director: Norman Wray III. **(Page 10)**
- **Corning Area Bible Club Camp, Ulysses, Pennsylvania:** Founded in 1956. Traditional camping program. Camp director: David Mogren. **(Page 12)**
- **Mandaville Camp & Retreat Center, Winthrop, New York:** Founded in 1974. Traditional camping programs along with Adirondack wilderness adventure trips, horsemanship, Pioneer Boys, Base Camp, and a leadership program for teens. Camp directors: Bob and Sharon Emmett. **(Page 14)**
- **Millstream Bible Camp & Retreat Centre, Omeme, Ontario, Canada:** Founded in 1958. Traditional summer camp program and year-round retreat center. Camp Director: Larry Chupa. **(Page 16)**
- **Streamside Camp and Conference Center, Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania:** Founded in 1942. Summer camping program focused on reaching urban youth and year-round retreat center. Camp director: Craig Vincent. **(Page 18)**
- **Additional BCM camps not featured:**
  - Cortland Bible Club Camp - <http://www.cortlandbibleclubcamp.com/>
  - Mount Traber Bible Camp and Retreat Centre - <http://www.mountraber.org/>
  - BCM Affiliate Pine Ridge Camp - <http://www.pineridgecamp.com/>



Dinner and a campfire



Zipline— Part of the ropes courses



Playing Gaga Ball



4 BCMWorld

Fun on the water

## Big Sky Bible Camp

The setting of Big Sky Bible Camp in Bigfork, Montana, just begs for an unforgettable camping experience. The campground is surrounded by Montana's beautiful Rocky Mountains. A lake right on the property is available for swimming and tubing. Big Sky offers ropes courses, gaga ball (a type of dodgeball, but played inside a "pit" with just one ball), archery, and rifle shooting.

The summer of 2014 offered nine full weeks of camp. Seven of those weeks were co-ed along with one week specifically for junior high girls and one week for junior high boys. The running theme for the entire summer was "Jesus Is Enough," based around the key verse of Philippians 3:8: "What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ."

About 600 campers enjoyed Big Sky Bible Camp's program this summer. God has worked in exciting ways. One female high school camper from a difficult life background had been coming to camp for several years. Always

disinterested in spiritual issues, she doubted the very existence of God. But this summer her counselor took the time to have several good conversations with her, and by the end of her week of camp, this young girl received Jesus Christ as Savior.

Another young man began coming to camp in 2011. Coming from a non-Christian background, he was very confused about spiritual things. This year he talked endlessly with his counselor about the Gospel and the Bible itself – and came to know Christ as his personal Savior.

Camp is not just the place for young people to receive Christ as Savior. It is also the place for spiritual growth. One young girl began attending camp as a third grader. It was her first exposure to the Bible. She accepted Christ as Savior a few years ago and is now excited to come back each summer and continue to grow. Camp is still her only exposure to anything spiritual.



Chapel time

About 30 volunteers, mostly college-age young people, make these weeks of camp possible. Director Jamy Landis says, “We are just so thankful for a wonderful staff here, both year round and summer. We pray a lot for unity in the staff and God has blessed us in this way greatly this summer.”

Please pray for Big Sky Bible Camp as they are looking into a potential new facility. Pray also as they figure out how to handle the growth that is occurring with summer camp and year-round guest groups.

Keep up with the happenings at Big Sky, sign up for newsletters, see more pictures, or even volunteer by visiting their website: <http://bigskybiblecamp.org>.



# Bliss Summit Bible Camp

For 2014's summer program, Bliss Summit Bible Camp in Bliss, New York, ran a medieval theme entitled "For the Kingdom", based on Matthew 6:33 ("But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.") Young people learned about the kingdom of God and their place in that kingdom.

During Bliss Summit's five weeks of camp, children and staff enjoy an archery range, a fishing pond, and a hillside waterslide. Forty volunteers—a mix of teens, college students, and adults—helped run summer camp this year.

Director Patrick Barringer explains, "We keep track of how many 'camper weeks' we have, which means if a camper attends more than one week they are counted for both. This summer we hosted 186 'camper weeks.'" Campers ranged from grade 3 through one specific week for teens between grades 7 and 12.



One camper who attended more than one week was a boy who'd never even opened a Bible before coming to camp. Camp director Patrick Barringer shares, "His mother described him as being generally apathetic and uninterested in anything. At the end of the first week of camp, he told his mom that he liked camp and wanted to come back for the rest of the weeks. She allowed him to return. Later in the summer, she enthusiastically related how over the summer she'd seen his role models change from rappers and professional athletes to staff he spent time with at camp. We are praying God continues to work in his heart while he is not at camp."



“This summer was very challenging to our family,” adds Patrick, “as it was our—my wife Emily and I—first summer as directors of the camp and we also had to deal with personal loss. My brother-in-law Jake Baxter had been a regular participant in the camp ministry. During the summer, he passed away in a tragic accident. We [and the counselors Jake had trained] were faced with the challenge of carrying on with camp in the midst of the sorrow and pain. Through this hardship, we were extremely blessed by the help and support provided by our brothers and sisters in Christ both locally and around the world through BCM.” A blessing in the Barringers’ summer was the birth of Patrick and Emily’s second child – a little girl, Eliana Loraine.



Bliss Summit Camp Director

Pray that God would send more campers to Bliss Summit Bible Camp and that lives would be impacted. Pray for Jake Baxter’s wife and three young children in their time of loss, as well as the many campers and counselors impacted by Jake’s ministry. Pray as well for wisdom in camp leadership and an increasing volunteer base.

Get involved at Bliss Summit! Find out more by visiting their website: <http://www.blisssummit.com>



# Camp Sankanac



The very first BCM International camp was founded in 1941 in Spring City, Pennsylvania. Today Camp Sankanac is a flourishing year-round camping and retreat complex, which includes a conference center named after BCM founder Bessie Traber. While Camp Sankanac is mostly cabins, the Traber Center is a motel-style, handicap-accessible facility used for day camps and year-round retreats.

Camp Sankanac is unique in that all eight weeks of its summer camp are segregated, boys and girls, ages 7-16. The first four weeks are for boys, the last four weeks are

for girls. Each week has a different theme, so campers can pick and choose their week(s) based on which theme strikes their interest. Two regular favorites for the boys are Army and Navy – a 50-year Camp Sankanac tradition. “Shipwrecked” was a popular new theme this summer for the girls. Sankanac also has a girls-only horse camp, held for the first time this year on Sankanac property. Attendance was so good the horse camp was extended an extra week.

One of BCM’s largest camp, Sankanac has much to offer. Campers enjoy an Olympic-sized swimming pool and brand new paintball course. With French Creek running right through camp property, water sports include boating, fishing, “creek-stomping” and inner-tubing. A waterslide shoots down one hill. There is a pond for “funyaks” (kayaks) and fishing. A “Creation Room” allows campers to learn about the differences between creation and evolution and the accuracy of the Bible.

Six full-time families run the camp along with nearly 75 volunteers. Three-quarters of those volunteers were once campers themselves. Josh Brackbill, Director of Camping, is thankful for this summer’s enthusiastic group of staffers—even when playing games in the middle of the night during “Mission Impossible” week! Josh says, “Our counselors encourage the campers not just into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, but to also compare everything they see, read, and hear to what God has to say about it in His Word.”

Josh shares an example of a returning camper who received Christ last summer. This year she returned to camp wanting to know how to live more like a Christian. Her “village director” (counselor) offered to give the girl a





ride to church until the counselor returned to college that fall. Before leaving, she took time to line up a ride so that the girl could continue attending church. Many such stories could be told of how Sankanac staff at Sankanac build lasting relationships with their campers.

This year two young sisters from a Hindu background were invited by friends to attend camp. During the week, one of those friends led the older sister to Jesus Christ. By the end of the week, the younger sister also had prayed with her counselor to receive Christ as Savior. Pray for these young girls as they grow in their newfound faith!

One mother called Josh at the end of camp to talk about her son and some of his friends. They'd had a difficult week of camp. But one little boy had shared how he'd learned to pray more and was beginning to experience God answering his prayers.

More than fifty Sankanac campers received Christ as Savior this summer. Many other children showed visible growth in their spiritual walk.

Pray for Sankanac staff as they work to balance camp life with their family life. Pray as well for a new head cook. The current cook has been on staff for forty years, but is no longer able to continue. Pray for wisdom and discernment in the transition as this cook passes on her wisdom and knowledge of such a vital role in the summer camp ministry.

Watch videos of the happenings at summer camp, sign up for father/son weekend September 12-14, and keep updated with Camp Sankanac and the Traber Center by visiting their website: <http://campsankanac.org/>





Camp Sonshine 2014

## Camp Sonshine

2014 marks the 35th anniversary of BCM's Camp Sonshine in Honeybrook, Pennsylvania. Camp Sonshine runs for just one week during the summer, but it impacts more than 80 children during that week. Campers enjoy a variety of activities including horseback riding, mini golf, a zip line, street hockey, and swimming.

Norman Wray, III is the director at Camp Sonshine. Like many BCM camp directors, Norman began as a camper at Camp Sonshine himself decades back before assuming the director's role of. This year Norman, along with his wife Virginia and 20 other staff, most of these, returning volunteers, welcomed 88 campers. Among volunteer staff were three teens.



This year's camp theme was "To Know Christ and Make Him Known." During the first chapel of camp, a young girl received Christ as her Savior. Later her mother expressed that Camp Sonshine had done more in one week to impact her daughter's life than all the weeks of attending other camps in previous years combined. Camp director Norman Wray credits this primarily to the Sonshine staff: "Our counselors know how camp guided them to a closer walk with their Savior Jesus Christ.

They are counselors because they want to pass on their own spiritual growth at camp to other children and teens.”

The attendance of Camp Sunshine continues to grow—at 88 up by twenty children from 2013. The line-up of special speakers changes each evening, keeping the kids interested in the messages they share. This year, the guest speakers included comedian Gordon Douglas, Maranatha Productions, and BCM missionary Nancy Lutz.

Pray that Camp Sunshine’s attendance would reach 100 next summer. Pray also that the Lord would provide a camp nurse for next summer.

Join their Facebook page in order to watch videos, see additional pictures, and get involved! <https://www.facebook.com/groups/campsonshinebcmint/>



## Corning Area Bible Club Camp

Corning Area Bible Club Camp was founded 70 years ago. For the past 22 years, the camp has rented its facilities from Penn York Camp in Ulysses, Pennsylvania. The camp runs for two weeks each summer. The camp director David Mogren was a camper himself since he was eight years old. He worked his way up through the ranks—camper, kitchen aide, counselor, missionary speaker, and finally BCM missionary and camp staff since 2001.

This year's junior week theme was "Our God is Able". Teen week focused on "Pushing Back the Dark." Total attendance included 58 junior campers and 51 teen campers. Many received Christ as Savior, but camp was also a time for rededication. Camp director David Mogren shares, "I always enjoy reading Facebook posts by campers, many expressing how it was the best week of their summer, how much they miss it, how excited they are to return next summer, and how they felt accepted and made new friends. I am especially blessed by comments concerning spiritual growth and a desire to follow Jesus in their daily lives."



Corning area Junior Camp



Corning area Teen Camp



During their week at camp, Corning Area children and teens enjoy an abundance of water activities. There is not only an in-ground pool, but a 200-foot waterslide and a pond used for fishing, canoeing, and paddle boats. When not in the water, campers can be found learning archery or being challenged to complete a ropes course. There is a craft shop, a fully equipped rec room, and a snack shop. Also available on the grounds are bike trails, a disc golf course, a sand volleyball court, and tether ball poles.

Pray for an increase in campers at Corning Area Bible Club Camp and for decisions that were made this summer by the campers.

Visit their website to keep informed of not just the camp season, but school year Bible Clubs in the Corning, New York, area:

<http://corningareabibleclub.org/>



# Mandaville Camp and Retreat Center

Bob and Sharon Emmett have been directors at Mandaville Camp and Retreat Center in the upper New York State city of Winthrop for fourteen years. Their three children grew up on camp property. Now that they are all teenagers, all three contribute camp ministry work both as staff and campers.

The Emmetts are joined by two other BCM missionary families – Dave and Becky Hannon and Ryan and Amanda Siver. The Hannon's fill the roles of maintenance supervisor and camp nurse while the Sivers are Director of Programming and camp cook. For the past eight years, BCM missionary Don Jackson has been the Bible teacher. A variety of other volunteers, including kitchen staff and counselors, rounded out the help for 2014's summer camp.

In existence for 40 years, Mandaville runs a year-round camping center. During summer months, they offer eight weeks of camp. Nine different programs are offered, some of them running consecutively, optimizing their facilities and the summer months. These include two weeks of staff training and three weeks of leadership training for teens. Programs are arranged by age from the youngest campers in first grade all the way through the senior year of high school.

The property covers 205 acres, but much of this is undeveloped and wooded. Camp director Bob Emmett explains the reason: "We utilize it [undeveloped woods] for an emphasis on learning and discovering in God's Creation, which we feel is part of our niche as a camp. We have no developed waterfront on the property. But we've been creative to utilize resources in our own 'back yard', such as the town beach at a nearby lake, the Adirondack Mountains, a local riding stable."



Mandaville’s theme this summer was the C.S. Lewis fantasy land of “Narnia.” Bob Emmett explains, “The Bible lessons focused on character qualities demonstrated by the stories’ kings and queens—and of course, Aslan himself—such as humility, faith, sacrifice, and courage.”

One week of camp is specifically for what Bob describes as “the littlest of the little”—campers ages 6-8. This week is slightly shorter, only Monday through Thursday, to help avoid things like homesickness. This summer’s “littlest” week filled all but two available bunks. It was a special time for the counselors when two little girls received Christ as Savior one morning.



This year, Mandaville launched a new outreach entitled “Camp on the Road.” During one particular week, camp staff was divided up with part of the staff assisting a local church in conducting a Vacation Bible School program. The concept behind this new outreach was for camp staff to be “an outstretched arm” in offering practical assistance to the local church.

Mandaville staff are praising God for the two little girls who received Christ as Savior as well as many children who signed up for follow-up Mailbox Bible Club courses. Pray for the Gospel to take root in the hearts of Mandaville campers who heard it this summer. Mandaville will be hosting a 40th Anniversary Celebration. October 3-4, 2014. Pray for a good attendance to help celebrate this great milestone. Pray for Bob and Sharon Emmett and their family as they take a much-earned sabbatical this fall and winter.

On their website are additional details for the 40th anniversary celebration, pictures, and ways to get involved year-round: <http://campmandaville.org/>





## Mill Stream Bible Camp & Retreat Centre

Mill Stream Bible Camp and Retreat Centre in Omemee, Ontario, Canada hosted seven weeks of summer fun in 2014. Two weeks were segregated—boys and girls—but the rest were co-ed and divided up by ages. Each camp week had a different theme. Among the most popular was “Hawaii”. A total of 212 campers ranging from five years old to teenage enjoyed this summer’s programs.

Camp director Larry Chupa shares one exciting story from this year’s summer camp: “A BCM Bible Club teacher who has hosted after-school children’s programs for many years sponsored three children from a low-income housing development near her own home to attend Mill Stream. One 13-year-old girl had heard the Gospel several times before, but finally gave her life to Christ on her fourth day at camp. How amazing it is to see the transformation of a rebellious heart converted to peace and joy!”





Mill Stream campers were joined by 38 staff and volunteers, mostly young people between the ages of 16-24. If seeing children come to Christ is exciting, so is watching young-adult volunteers grow in their spiritual walk. Director Larry Chupa reports joyfully, “We were blessed to see how God matured our staff emotionally and spiritually in the short seven weeks that they were at camp,”

Mill Stream has been in existence since 1946. They have been at their current facility since 1963. This is a year-round camp with cabins that are conducive to summer camping as well as winterized cabins for retreats in cold weather. This year Mill Stream leadership praise God for three new cabins. They are also grateful for a number of children who received Christ as Savior this summer and for the excellent staff the Lord provided for them.

Keep informed with Mill Stream and even rent space for a retreat by visiting their website:

<http://millstream.ws/index.html>





## Streamside Camp and Conference Center

Hiking and playing outdoors are adventures children growing up in the country take for granted. But an entire population of children grow up in urban areas where they rarely if ever get to experience the wide world of outdoors or the beauty of nature. Since its earliest years, Streamside Camp and Conference Center in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, has been dedicated to help remedy this situation. Camp staff understand how God uses the beauty of His creation to draw people to Himself. For this reason, they focus on camping programs for inner-city youth.



Every summer buses bring children and teens from inner cities like Philadelphia and New York City to the green, wooded setting of Camp Streamside in Pennsylvania's Pocono mountains. For many of these urban children and even teenagers, this is their first trip away outside the inner city.

Another of BCM's larger camp properties, Streamside can accommodate up to 278 campers at one time. This summer almost 600 inner-city campers attended their urban youth programs. 43 staff members, 12 adult volunteers, 12 teens enrolled in leadership training programs, and 15 chaperons from collaborating Christian ministries kept camp programs running this summer.

As a year-round facility, Streamside also accommodates retreats for a wide variety of churches and Christian ministry organizations. While urban youth is a major focus, more than just inner city children attend camp there. Streamside offers family and day camps as well as Student Leadership Training camps. Activities include archery, boating, fishing, campfires, hayrides, hiking, gaga pit (a type of dodgeball, but played inside a "pit" with just one ball), outdoor pool, and snow tubing for winter retreats.

This summer's overall theme resonates well with a generation consumed by social media: "@StreamsideCamp #snapshots." Campers absorbed images of God's love, including "God's Love is for Real", "God's Love is Forever", and "God's Love is for Sharing". Their theme verse was 1 John 4:16: "So that we may come to know and to believe the love that God has for us."

Some Streamside campers share their thoughts on this summer's camp week:

“Thank you for providing me with this wonderful week. I gave my life to Christ and I believe my life will change.”—Integrity

“What I like most about Streamside is how much they appreciate God. God should be number one in everyone's life. I felt as though this camp helped me get closer to God. I also liked the activities. At Streamside they help you experience new things.”—Jada



Kara Calvert traveled from Lake Orion, Michigan, to be a counselor at Streamside for the first time this summer. She shares her experience: “Something that stands out specifically is about God's peace in crazy situations. At night, before we turned the lights out in our cabin, we would do group devotions—one that we as counselors wrote during training week. The one I'd written was on the peace God gives even when life can feel chaotic. Though this devotion was meant for my campers, it affected me just as much. The core verse I used was John 14:27: "I give you peace, the kind of peace only I can give. It isn't like the peace that this world can give, so don't be worried or afraid." After a day filled with a ton of energy and often a good dose of emotion, it was hard for all of us to unwind at the end of the day. To relax the campers, we would turn off all the lights until there was just one flashlight beam on the ceiling. Then in a quiet voice, I would tell my campers about how God's peace is there as long as we seek it out. As I talked, I could see my energetic group of girls slowly wind down until they were ready for sleep. As I helped them into their bunks and tucked them in, I reflected on how much peace God had given me in that moment as well. Serving touches ourselves just as much as the ones we are there to serve.”

Pray that Streamside Camp will continue to be an appealing, safe and life-changing place for campers and staff. Pray for more staff. Streamside is in need of additional team members for the summer of 2015. Pray for strong relationships with collaborating Christian ministries and resources for those ministries to be able to send an increasing number of children to camp.

Sign up for a winter retreat or keep informed with the many happenings of Streamside Camp by visiting: <http://streamside.org/>



Camp Staff 2014



## BCM UK—*Get Real!* and *JaM* at Barton Camp 2014

By: Jane King

What do sheep, cheese, fresh air and kids have in common? BCM-UK's Barton Camp! Located not far from the town of Cheddar in the rolling hills of Somerset County, Barton is only a short drive from England's southwest coast across the bay from Cardiff, Wales. Surrounded by stunning scenery and bucolic images of grazing cattle and sheep, the camp offers an ideal place to help children KNOW, LOVE, and OBEY God without the daily distractions of a hectic life.

BCM International's UK branch began as a Bible teaching ministry in 1947. BCM-UK has been running youth camps throughout the United Kingdom since the early 1950s. Other ministries include Bible Clubs in schools, churches and community centers as well as running school worship/assemblies and Bible Explorer programs during or after school. Training seminars for church volunteers cover BCM's core children's ministry training curriculum *In Step with the Master Teacher* (ISMT), the evangelistic course *Sharing Christ with Kids* and puppet workshops. BCM-UK personnel serve in England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

This year, BCM-UK held two camps at the Barton facility. The first camp, *Get Real!*, was held from August 8-14, 2014, for ages eleven through fourteen years old. *JaM* camp (Jesus and Me) immediately followed from August 15-22 for ages eight through eleven. BCM missionary and camp director Angeline White explains, "For several years prior to this summer, England had just run a junior camp for the younger age group. But with the help of volunteers from BCM's Scotland and Ireland camps, we were able to start our new camp—*Get Real!*—for the older kids. For our first year, we had 17 campers in the older age group, half of whom don't regularly go to church. Several of these had come to camp as children. It was encouraging to see their excitement when they found out there was now a camp for their age."

Not only does *Get Real!* provide an opportunity for continued input in the lives of campers as they grow from children to teenagers, it is an excellent means of discipling and mentoring youth for leadership roles. Hopefully, some of these teens will grow to be future camp staff. Camp director Angeline White explains further:

“The idea behind camp is for children to experience a fun week in a loving Christian family environment where they can spend time in God's Word, discovering more about Jesus—beginning or growing further in a life of faith in Jesus. For children we usually see only at weekly Bible clubs, camp is a great opportunity to build good relationships and to see God's love in action through staff and other children who already follow Jesus.” One good example of this was a JaM camper who shared how he struggled at school because he was the only one in his class who believed in Jesus. Immediately his group of campers and leaders stopped to pray for him.



Fun at camp

For older campers, witnessing staff coming together from across England, Scotland and Ireland to minister to them really touched their hearts. For the JaM camp, BCM USA missionary Jane King joined UK staff as Bible teacher and camp missionary, sharing recent ministry trips to Nigeria with the campers. She also helped with crafts, pool games and free time. Jane shares, “It was exciting to see campers become so engaged in the Bible Time lesson they forgot to chime in with their own assigned role of sound effects.”



Dining Hall

On the first night of camp, the children were invited to fill out large posters with anything and everything they knew about Jesus. Some of their responses were both creative and humorous: “Jesus made lots of decisions.” “He created my Mum.” “He could pray a lot.” “He was baptized with a booming voice.” “He didn’t make looms.” (In case you’re wondering, that’s the new craft craze of making bracelets with small colored rubber bands.)

Other campers posed thought-provoking comments: “He stood up for what he believed in.” “Jesus got trapped in a cave after he was on the cross, then he pushed a rock and got out.” “He has a mother and two fathers—God and Joseph.” “He’s a celebrity.” “42” (A reference to The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Universe, where 42 is the meaning of life, the universe and everything.)



What do you know about Jesus

And, as always, children can be candid as well as encouraging: “Jesus is amazing!” “He’s your friend.” “He tells the truth.” “Jesus loves everyone, no matter if you are ugly or short or . . . Jesus loves everybody!” “Jesus helps us to wash away our sin.” “He died so we could live.”

Yes, yes He did! *“From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise...” (Psalm 8:2 NIV)*

At the end of camp, many children were reluctant to leave. Some were even in tears. Relationships forged and spiritual growth were evident. Campers were asked, “What would you tell others about camp?” Blake immediately volunteered, “It’s GREAT! Amazing! There’s lots of fun things to do!” Tilum quickly added, “I think it’s a good thing to learn about God.” Tom was especially impressed with the volunteer staff. “Leaders are paying to come and quit their jobs for a week to come look after us. That’s amazing! They really want us to learn about God!”

Camp director Angeline shares about a card she received after camp from a sister and brother and their mother: “The girl thanked me for making it possible for her to go on ‘such an amazing, AWESOME camp!’. The boy thanked me for teaching them about the Bible (he saved his money at camp so he could buy a Bible on the last day). Mum thanked me for showing kindness, support and care and for praying for them.”



Bible time



Camp staff expressed their own thoughts about camp and its impact. "The leaders and campers were great, and God used the week for His glory," reflects Peter Thompson, a staff volunteer at *Get Real!* Tom and Christine Morrow, *JaM Camp* leaders, add, "Best camp we have been on!" Another camp volunteer, Esther Bull, shared the following in a longer article for BCM-UK's *Link Up* magazine:

"One of my most enjoyable weeks this summer was spent on *JaM (Jesus and Me) Camp* at Barton, Somerset. Don't get me wrong; for a quiet introvert like me, spending a busy week with 31 children and about 20 adults is an exhausting experience! It is also very rewarding. This year was my fourth at camp and I think it was the best yet. . . It was such a privilege to be able to share the good news of God's love and Jesus' perfect, voluntary sacrifice with these young people. . . Free time was quickly filled with crafts, games, sports, and zooming along on the camp's new zip-wire and everyone enjoyed splashing in the swimming pool. My kids can't wait to go back again next year".



Outdoor Fun



As in many countries around the world, the UK faces the challenge to effectively train up the next generation in the truth of God's word. And not just the children who attend church, but many more who are growing up without any knowledge of Jesus Christ. Right now, BCM-UK has numerous opportunities to run Bible clubs in schools and for churches to run Bible clubs that reach out to their community. But many of these needs are not met due to lack of volunteers, heavy workloads or busy schedules. A current need for BCM-UK is many more full-time workers. Please pray with the BCM-UK missionaries and volunteer teams: "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matthew 9:30 NIV)

## Interested in Serving?

Contact us at [reachndevelop@bcminintl.org](mailto:reachndevelop@bcminintl.org)



Monroe Bible clubs Fair Tent

## MISS DEWEY AND THE GOSPEL PUPPETS GO TO THE FAIR!

By Jeanette Windle



Miss Dewey and Pal

The last week of August, 2014, thousands of visitors streamed into the small town of Gilbert in northeast Pennsylvania to savor the delights of the annual West End County Fair. Prize-winning animals to admire. Cotton candy and fried foods galore. Carnival rides. But children and parents in the know threaded straight through temporary streets to a small, white tent where a group of quirky, colorful old friends joyously welcomed them back.

The Gospel Puppets, under the expert direction of their leader Miss Dewey (named after her creator), have been welcoming families to West End since 1978. This loveable troupe now numbers forty puppets along with a crew of 6-8 human handlers. Each fair day the puppets present a variety of dramatic performances that incorporate different Bible lessons and Christian values.

Puppet leader Miss Dewey (check her out in that red dress, top curls, and bright lipstick!) acts as moderator, interviewing her human team mates and fellow puppets. She loves to take the lead as well in drama roles, whether the movie star in “Joy Bandit” or a beauty queen in “Queen for a Day”. Mr. Huey (look for the yellow smiley sticker on his brown shirt) in contrast just loves to be interviewed and sing Gospel songs for the children. Micah on the Gospel piano and robust, blonde-haired Geraldine add their voices to the chorus. Others play a variety of characters in the story dramas.

Eight animal puppets play an integral role in the troupe as well. Hamsters Charlie and Stanley warble along with their guitar and banjo to draw in a crowd. In one story called "The Unlovable", which teaches about being kind with God's help to even unlovable people, Frog takes a lead role, his top hit: "*Have You Kissed Any Frogs Today?*" Squeakers the Skunk has the privilege of giving out the Bible Award at the end of each story session.



Gospel Puppets

The Gospel Puppet fair outreach is sponsored by Monroe County Bible Clubs, an outreach of BCM International. Heading up the human contingent is puppeteer Jim Ecker. A BCM missionary in Monroe County, PA, for almost forty years, Jim conducts "Released Time Bible Classes" for school children, the Mailbox Bible Club (free Bible study courses for children and adults), school year and summer Bible clubs, and a Christian literature distribution ministry.

Running an entire week’s outreach at the fair takes a lot of help. A team of volunteers sets up the tent, then tears it back down at week’s end. Adult volunteers take turns in the booth from 12:00- 9:30 pm daily to answer inquiries and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ individually with those who express interest. Nor does the work start with fair week. For two months beforehand, Jim Ecker holds weekly training session with 6 - 8 Christian teenagers who serve as his puppeteer team during fair week.

“It is always amazing to see how the Lord provides the puppet team each year,” Jim shares. “What a privilege to join together to present Jesus Christ through puppets!”



Jim Ecker and the Gospel Puppets

For some families, the Gospel Puppets have become a generational tradition. Along with the county fair, Jim Ecker has been taking Miss Dewey and other puppets to share at schools, chapels, and other children's outreach events since he himself started as a puppeteer in 1978. He remembers one little boy at a local Christian school chapel who was thoroughly enjoying the show. Later that same week, the boy saw Jim at a neighborhood family Bible Study.

"Hey, there's the Puppet Man!" he exclaimed to his mother. The family has been helping ever since at the annual fair outreach. That little boy grew up, got married, and had a family of his own. This year his two teen boys were puppeteers for the fair.

In total at this year's fair, Jim and his team of seven puppeteers (see photo) presented 64 Gospel Puppet performances. Over 9000 pieces of Christian literature were given out by adult volunteers or selected from the "Free Basket!" Free Bible pens, pencils and postcards were made available too along with Bibles and Christian-living material for families.

For the volunteers themselves, among this year's highlights was one mother who'd brought her children to the tent the year before and selected a Christian Gospel booklet to read. She came back this year to share with the volunteers that she had become a Christian after reading the booklet. Now she wanted more booklets to share her new faith with her family and friends.



Gospel Puppets team 2014



Watching Puppet Show— Fair Tent

Another woman who stopped by the tent told how she was going through a divorce. Jim Ecker shared God's love with her and gave her some helpful literature. The next day she came back with her children and relatives so they too could hear the Gospel story and music through puppet shows as well as receive more Christian literature.

One mother who brought her children to the puppet presentations had herself attended eight years of Released Time Bible Classes during her school years. She was delighted to introduce her own children to Miss Dewey and other puppets she'd enjoyed so much in her childhood.

After 38 years, Jim is a familiar person to many fairgoers. He shares, "It's always exciting to have past Bible Class and Bible Club attendees come up to me and say 'I'll bet you don't know who I am!' Once I place in my mind those young children I once taught, we reflect on past memories. It is a privilege to give spiritual encouragement to them and their families."

To help keep those memories alive, the Bible club tent displays pictures and photo albums of all the Monroe County Bible Club ministries over the years. One mother brought her five children and husband to show them her younger self in the ministry albums—including her own stint as a teenage Gospel Puppets puppeteer. She shares how her involvement in that ministry helped her learn teamwork and provide spiritual encouragement that has benefited her throughout her adult life.

Jim Ecker offers a special thanksgiving for the beautiful, sunny weather throughout this 2014 fair week. He is thankful as well for the unity and excellent teamwork among all the puppeteers and adult volunteers—and of course Miss Dewey and her puppet troupe—as they shared the Gospel message in so many different ways over the week to people of all ages.

The Gospel Puppets are looking forward to being a familiar fixture at the West End County Fair for many more years to come. When asked what his hopes and vision are for the future of this ministry, Jim Ecker concludes, "To see more Christian teens and adults volunteer for the needs of the fair ministry and the Gospel Puppets. Also to seek out and put into practice innovative new ideas to further reach people through the puppets and Christian literature."

If you'd like to be one of those volunteers, contact Jim Ecker directly at: [jimeckerbcm@verizon.net](mailto:jimeckerbcm@verizon.net).



Kids Watching Puppet Show



Monroe County Bible Clubs Gospel Puppet Show-Fair



# BCMWorld

**President**  
Dr. Martin D. Windle

**Editor**  
Jeanette Windle

**Graphic Designer**  
Brian Biegert

**Contributors**  
Lisa Biegert  
Jane King  
Jeanette Windle

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Bcm International  
201 Granite Run Drive  
Suite 260  
Lancaster, PA 17601 USA

[www.bcmintl.org](http://www.bcmintl.org)  
1-888-BCM-INTL



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717-560-9601 ext. 201  
[rweidman@bcmintl.org](mailto:rweidman@bcmintl.org)



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