

Jesse's Camps has a home at Tallahassee's hidden gems



Your Turn

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Guest columnist

Spring break week in Tallahassee is a time not only for pollen and the glorious profusion of flowers, but it is also a time when a special spring break week camp known as "Jesse's Camps" takes place at five of our local community centers.

The seed for Jesse's camps was planted in 2010 when then director of Tallahassee's Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Affairs, Dee Crumpler, agreed to allow me to create "something" for youngsters in our community who would enjoy similar activities that my son enjoyed before his untimely death at age 5 ½.

Our family was a softball family with Jesse's dad, stepmom and myself being city league softball umpires. Jesse loved being at the ball parks and loved running bases in between games. He was a member of the Tumbling Tots program. Current Tallahassee Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Affairs director Ashley Edwards and her staff have opened our community centers as home to that "something" which has become a week-long spring break camp for youngsters who otherwise had no special programs during the spring break week.

As an old social worker, my tendency is to make use of community resources and to ensure that time spent together is meaningful, inspirational, thought provoking, and filled with delight. These week-long camps are a great opportunity to empower, enrich, and inspire our youngsters while having fun.

We live in an incredibly giving community where friends and colleagues from all walks of life have gladly accepted an invitation to participate with our youngsters. Special guests have included former Justice Peggy Quince who was the first African-American female justice of the Florida Supreme Court. We have had special classes designed for our group including presentations on conflict resolution, cooperative games, writing poetry, making peace quilts, science programs and more.

This year's guests included City Commissioner Curtis Richardson who welcomed each group of youngsters and encouraged them to get an educa-



Dance instructor Mary Allgire leads an old time dance. PROVIDED PHOTO

tion, vote when they turn 18 and become actively involved in community. We also welcomed forester Stan Rosenthal who took a group on a walk through the woods and taught the basics of tree identification. College Football Hall of Famer (UF) Carlos Alvarez shared his life story and lessons learned on and off the field. Music therapist Jane Estrada, the Tallahassee Youth Orchestra, and Mary Allgire and the Long Forgotten String Band all contributed to filling our days with music. Our School Board members returned this year to read books to our youngsters and to encourage them in their studies.

Tallahassee's hidden gems and treasures are our community centers. Not only are they home to Jesse's Camps, but throughout the year their staff are committed to the well-being of community and providing excellence in service.

Our thanks especially to Ashley Edwards and the incredible staff at our community centers. Their dedication to our youngsters and community throughout the year are a testament to the caring nature of our community.

Please visit our website for more information <https://www.talgov.com/parks/JesseCorreiaMemorialScholarship>

Martha Weinstein is the founder of Jesse's Camps and does fund raising throughout the year to support it. She has called Tallahassee home for 48 years and enjoys creating peace in her endeavors. She is grateful to be allowed to celebrate and honor her son Jesse's life in such a meaningful way.