

Loving Swami

SSE Children's Program at the Region 3 Annual Retreat

September 05th – 06th 2015, Unicoi Lodge, Helen, Georgia

The scenic location of the lush mountains of Georgia along with its perpetual cool breeze, was the perfect venue for a wonderful weekend that was to unfold for the SSE children, teachers and parents of Region 3.

Over fifty children from the region assembled in quiet order on the morning of the 5th in the hall designated for the SSE activities. The children extended a loving welcome to Swami by silently watching a beautiful darshan video. Next, the regional SSE coordinator welcomed the children, teachers and parents, and provided a brief overview of the agenda for the two days and the various activities that were lined up for the children.

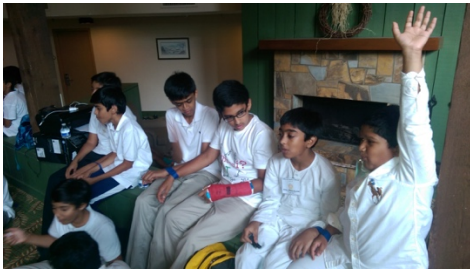


Some of the Children along with Dr. William Harvey

The children got to know each other via a fun filled ice breaker game of "Who Am I". A word with a spiritual connotation was identified by one team of children, and another child from the other team had to guess what it was by asking a series of questions with Yes / No being the only valid response. The children then practiced their songs that they were to present in the main program the next day.

After a short break, the children put into practice what they learnt in the previous year on the theme of "Respect for Nature". The children and the teachers went for a hike through the Frog Pond Trail, a pretty pond surrounded by greenery. An exciting game of "Pass the Parcel" revealed many wonderful insights and teachings of Swami to the children.

In the afternoon, the children played a team building game aptly titled “The One Behind The Many”. This game stressed on the importance of working together with each other united in purpose and effort as ONE.



The children enjoying the Unity Games

The children were paired up and their wrists were tied together. Using only the free hands, the children had to execute a number of tasks such as blowing a balloon and tying it, throwing a ball and catching it with a cup, and unwrapping candies. Despite the difficulty of the tasks, the children accomplished it with elan due to their spirit of unity and team work.

It was then time for practice for the presentation the following day on the topic of “Respect”. The group 1 and some group 2 children went to work on a puppet show. The rest of the children were then grouped as teams. It was amazing to watch the children come up with their own ideas and story line that elaborated on what they learnt in the SSE classes.

The first evening was wrapped up with an engaging Bhajan Anthakshari led by Mr. Krishna Prayag, one of the keynote speakers of the retreat.

The morning of the 6th got started with a vibrant devotional singing session by the children that was entirely planned and executed by them. After a couple of hours of more practice, the children got ready for their main presentation in the afternoon.

Each team of children presented the importance of respecting one’s country, fellow man, elders and nature via creative means of a TV Talk Show, an Independence Day celebration at a school, a discussion among two SSE children as they are returning from a service project, and episodes directly from Swami’s

own life. The puppet show by the Group 1 children was the icing on the cake. It was well crafted and executed by the children and kept the audience regaling with laughter at the same time imparting beautiful lessons.



Group 1 and 2 children enacting a Puppet Show



Group 3 children enacting a TV Talk Show on "Respect"

The evening was wrapped up with a wonderful service project also centered around respecting nature. Each child painted their own reusable canvas bag that they intend to use for the weekly SSE classes.



Group 3 Boys Painting Their Reusable Canvas Bags

To many, this weekend felt like we were verily in Trayee Brindavan in Swami's immediate presence attending a Summer Course. The memories of basking in His love, and soaking in the character building lessons imparted via the various activities would stay with all for a long time to come.

The children, teachers and parents eagerly look forward to the next annual retreat.