



The DREAM Program, Inc.

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Sept. 27, 2007



**Birchwood DREAM Update
July & August 2007**

Greetings from DREAM!

July and August were packed months for DREAM! During the two months, summer programming continued and ended, Camp ran all six of its sessions, the hiring process continued, and we brought on ten new staff members!

As mentioned before, DREAM hired nine mentors to work for the summer as D-Unit Interns. Champlain College sophomore Kirsten Wunn has been working to provide programming for Birchwood, along with her “pod-mates,” Sandy Mervak (UVM/Franklin St community) and Julia Risk (UVM/Elm St community). During the two months, Kirsten and her team of interns kept busy providing an array of activities for the community. On site in Birchwood, Kirsten and children had a “water themed week” with water balloon games, slip-n-slides and other water activities, designed to help beat the heat of the summer! Activities also included scavenger hunts, kite making, arts and crafts, rocket building and crazy concoction making!

Kirsten tried to take children off site as much as possible and take advantage of places and events outside of the community. In early July, Kirsten, Sandy and Julia took 8 children sailing at the Lake Champlain Community Sailing Center in Burlington – a huge thanks to the sailing center for making the trip possible! Kirsten also took children to Lake Monsters baseball games, Bromley Mountain Thrill Zone in Bromley, VT, bowling at Yankee Lanes, Echo in Burlington, and the Burlington Waterfront for the Dragon Boat Festival. A group of children spent the day at Sandbar Park swimming and hanging out. At the end of the summer, all of the interns from around the state took a trip to the Maine Coast for a day at the ocean – a long yet wonderful day for the younger children in the program!

All of the interns and office support staff gathered mid July for a mid session retreat. The goals of the retreat were to assess the progress of summer, troubleshoot, provide support, share ideas and work on group trip planning. The two days were spent at Dartmouth’s Nunnemacher cabin in Lyme, NH. Everyone had a blast and left feeling energized for the second half of the summer!

The end of D-Unit programming came the third week of August and Kirsten celebrated with the community by doing a mini Beautification around Birchwood. Many children banded together to repaint and repair the benches and bus stop that we were put in a few years ago during the end of the program’s end of year Beautification.

Throughout the summer, Kirsten and her team of interns worked hard to promote fairness and equality in the community and through programming. Consequently, children were invited to participate in the summer programming as long as they followed rules of respect and this was communicated with parents as well. Interns also encouraged fundraising with the children. The



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goal of fundraising was to help children feel ownership of the program and work together towards a goal – ie going to Bromley Mountain or visiting the ocean. Many thanks to WalMart of Williston for hosting a few carwashes and even matching the proceeds our programs made!

Camp DREAM was in session from the beginning of July through mid August. 13 children from Birchwood were invited to attend and 7 did. At Camp, children spent time getting to know children from other DREAM communities, log rolling, tubing down the Lamoille River and learning about Camp and nature. While at Camp, children were expected to pitch in and contribute to Camp, whether it be helping in the organic garden, helping cook meals, wash dishes, or simply respecting the property. Through the summer, the organic garden flourished and with the help of the amazing folks at American Flatbread and our very own DREAMers, an outdoor clay oven and barbeque were built!

At Camp this summer, we also had volunteer crews from both NCCC (National Community Civilian Corps), a branch of AmeriCorps that travels in teams of ten and does direct service projects around the country and VYCC (Vermont Youth Conversation Corps), a group of young adults who work during the summer doing conservation projects around the state of Vermont. With the help from these two groups, we were able to finish our Adirondack Style Lean-to (which was used for the last session!), work on smaller projects throughout camp, such as building a floating dock and shed to store our boating equipment, and got an amazing amount of trail work accomplished. We also had a group of folks come out to camp from Seventh Generation and volunteer for a day. Groups worked on ‘funifying’ the waterfront, which included constructing a life-size checker board (!), helped in the garden, worked on our raft and helped build trellises around our newly planted edible landscape. A HUGE thank you to all of the hands who helped out with Camp this summer!

On August 27th, we brought on ten new AmeriCorps members to the DREAM staff! We couldn’t be more excited about the new staff and feel as though our months of interviewing and searching for the perfect applicants were well worth the effort. All of DREAM Inc. (17 of us!) spent the last days of August on a staff retreat up at the Taft Lodge on Mount Mansfield. The staff spent a few days getting psyched for the year and talking about DREAM’s guiding philosophies (Core Values, Theory of Change, Mission Statement, Vision) to help set the tone for the year.

The summer is wrapping up and the Local Programs are about to start up again for the year! Don’t forget to check for updates at <http://www.birchwood.dreamprogram.org/> And please, do not hesitate to contact us with questions or ideas!

Keep DREAMing!

Chris Brown
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www.dreamprogram.org