

## Why Newark? Why a Christian School?

Since 1923, Northrop campers have always been drawn from the New York City public schools. Why did we invite students from the Newark Christian School for a four day session, at Northrop and Taconic State Park, in August 2014?

One of our board members, Hubert, who has personally supported and has known one of the directors there for very many years, was confident that campers would meet the criteria that would be applied to NYC campers. We would not want campers that were discipline problems. These campers were preselected for us. We knew that the leader, Shelley Remaly, was dedicated, mature, and could handle the campers. Under our current situation, Northrop is in no position to recruit leaders and campers from NYC. So this was a good opportunity because we got preselected campers, transportation, and 24 hr. supervision. None of these we could supply on our own.

In addition we were very interested in having a four-day session, as a dry run for future primitive camping sessions with campers sleeping in tents at Northrop. Although we do not yet have a license for overnight camping at Northrop, the August 2014 session gave us practice in solving various logistical problems, including sleeping arrangements, food preparation, the water supply, bathrooms, and of course hiking in the woods and studying nature. The session would not have been possible without the remarkable NCS teacher Shelley Remaly, who took full responsibility for transporting the campers, pitching and taking down the tents, food preparation, clean-up, etc. She had the flexibility (and a close relationship with the parents of the children) to adapt to last-minute changes in the schedule, which a public school teacher would not have been able to do. And she did it all on her own time. Northrop paid for food for the August session, plus a few minor expenses, and that was it. (We also bought some tents, but we can use those for future sessions.)

Historically, Northrop campers have come from many different religions, ethnic backgrounds, family circumstances, etc. They have had two things in common: 1) their parents could not afford to send them to a commercial summer camp, and 2) an intense interest in nature. The NCS kids were from the “wrong side of the tracks” in Newark, and they wanted to learn everything they could about the natural world. Some had acute powers of observation, such as Aziz, who noticed near the summit of Mt. Everett that among the yellow jackets flying around a bush, were a second species of wasp, with greenish white stripes instead of yellow. The books in the camp library included a number of duplicate titles; we put these on one shelf, and invited the campers to help themselves. One girl, Sherley, took ten books home, including Dickens, Tennyson, Konrad Lorenz (King Solomon’s Ring), and a tree guide. Before they left, all of the kids were asked to write something about their experiences. I guess Sherley liked old books, because her paragraph began, “Botany! How I loveth botany!” And I know she liked to write, because she spent all her free time writing in her journal.

I think Galileo said it best. He said that God gave us two books, and the second book was the Book of Nature. Northrop campers have all wanted to read the second book, and the NCS campers were no exception.

In the future, if we ever hear about a Jewish school, or a Muslim school, or any other kind of school, with a teacher as awesome as Shelley Remaly, and children who want to read that second book, we will be happy to welcome them to Northrop Camp.