



ARTS AND CRAFTS attracts the concentration of these campers at Camp Kingswood in Bridgeton, **Maine**. This is one of the many activities for the 160 campers lucky enough to escape the urban summer heat.

Jewish Culture and Fun at Camp Kingswood

By Jane Weingarten
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Starr Herman had gone to **Maine** to follow in her father's footsteps this month, just as her older sister, Jenny, did for six years. Starr, a twelve-year-old girl from Newton, is one of many second generation campers at Camp Kingswood in Bridgeton, **Maine**, a place where 160 children play ball, swim, dance, sing, paint their faces, and also attend services on Shabbat, beneath the tall pines, by the shores of the crystal-clear spring-fed Woods Pond.

"For me, the nicest thing about Kingswood is the mix of children," said Director Mitchell Stern. About half of the campers pay full tuition. Others receive scholarships based on family income, and a small percentage come through agencies who underwrite the camp costs. This year, 25 newly arrived Russian children are attending Kingswood, with a subsidy from the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston.

"We looked at other camps. But I remembered my experience, and thought the girls would like it," Starr and Jen-

ny's father, Michael Herman said. The physical set-up of the camp and being with the other children were two of Michael Herman's favorite memories of his own camping experience at Kingswood, when he was a 13-year-old boy in 1956.

Stern, who is now in his 20th year at Kingswood, started as a camper in 1966. He served as a counselor, unit director, and assistant director before becoming the director last year. "It's fun, not fancy. It's family," Stern told the *Advocate*.

The Kingswood staff reflects the diversity that Stern calls "a wonderful mix." Counselors come from Israel, England, Scotland, and France. This month, Israeli staff members are planning a "floating raft" program like one done by youth groups in Israel. Campers will build rafts from wood, barrels and rope, and then race them on the lake.

More than a third of the campers are working as actors, stage crew members, or making scenery for this Saturday night's performance of "Alice in Wonderland." Sofia Gribanov of Rosindale, who will be the March Hare in the

play, has also written her own play while at Kingswood. Sofia, a sixth grader at Maimonides School, writes that she is "busy, happy, and with lots to do," her mother Irina says.

Michael Cohen of Newton, who will also perform in "Alice" this weekend, is the camp disc jockey. He does photography, hikes and runs in a road race at Kingswood. Michael, at Kingswood for the third summer, heard about the camp from friends. "It's not highly competitive. Kids of all abilities can find something to excel in," his mother, Susan Cohen, said.

For the less than 10 percent of the children who are referred by agencies, "this is home. Camp is the best place for them, where they get a sense of family in the bunks, and the meals are served family-style," Stern explained. One boy Stern said was homeless "cried at first. Just this week, he said he wants to stay for the second session."

Of this small group of children referred by agencies, Stern noted, "there are some who don't get a chance to

deal with kids their own age. This is a healthy atmosphere."

It's a tremendous transition for the 25 children whose families arrived from the Soviet Union this year. From the Soviet Union to Brookline to **Maine** is a big change, observed Stern. Although it's okay for these children to talk privately in Russian under a tree with their friends at mealtime, when they are with other campers, they must speak English.

"It's a good time for these Russian children, putting them into a nice melting pot. By the second year at camp, they are very Americanized," Stern emphasized.

Campers can attend Kingswood for one or two four-week sessions. This year for the first time, CJP budget cuts prevent giving any child two-month subsidies.

Kingswood is a coed camp, with 80 boys and 80 girls in attendance this month, Assistant Director Phyllis Medoff said. This week there will also be a carnival with cotton candy, snow cones, dunking booths, marriage booths, and much more.