



FEATURES

From California to Normandy Farms

Students keep tradition alive

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Earlier this summer, some lucky campers at Normandy Farms enjoyed a performance under the stars by a group of high school girls all the way from Arcadia, Calif. But this was not the first time such a show has been seen at the Foxboro campground.

The performance, "Girls of America," by a group of 47 spirited young ladies from Rio Hondo Preparatory School continues a tradition that goes back more than three decades. Rio Hondo students have been entertaining generations of campers at Normandy Farms since the 1970s.

The current performers, like the ones that came before them, thus form a unique connection between their school and our local campground. Two of the chaperones are RHP alumni who are no strangers to Normandy Farms.

The last time Chris Horton and his wife Kristy were at the campground, they were student performers. Every summer there is a trip for the girls and a separate trip for the boys. Chris portrayed President Abraham Lincoln in a show in the early 1980s and his picture appeared in this newspaper.

Now Chris and Kristy's daughter is a Rio Hondo student. Like their daughter, many RHP students are the second generation in their family to attend the school.

This year's themes were pride and patriotism in a musical revue that included dancing, singing, a special tribute to veterans and praise for the role grandparents play in our lives.

The current troupe of high school girls are among the almost-200 students who make up Rio Hondo Junior and Senior Prep School (RHP). The school, in a town just outside of Pasadena and near the Rose Bowl, was founded in 1964 with families in mind, where students of average ability could become fully prepared for college entrance.

The foundation for Rio Hondo began back in the 1950s before the school was actually formed. Several young men and women in Kare Youth League, formerly Boys' and Girls' Christian League, began the groundwork for the school. They wanted a school especially for students who had high aspirations for their lives.

Since that time, all students from sixth grade through high school follow the college preparatory path. This path includes music, drama, interscholastic sports, student government and social activities. This wide range of activities helps develop unique talents and provide a well-rounded learning experience.

Each summer, RHP has trips that involve groups of talented high school students entertaining audiences from across the country and even around the world. Two years ago, many of these girls travelled to Europe. This particular group voted to travel the Eastern Seaboard this summer, starting back on June 21.

The girls and their chaperones flew from Los Angeles to Miami. Once in Florida, they boarded a bus that would be their new mode of transportation for a journey covering thousands of miles and taking them five weeks to complete.



Girls of America, high school girls from Rio Hondo Prep School in Arcadia, Cal. ,perform for some lucky campers at Normandy Farms. The schools students have been performing at Normandy Farms for more than three decades. Foxboro was the last stop for this group of 47 spirited young ladies on their five-week journey that took them up the Eastern Seaboard. (Photos by Christine Igo Freeman)

Foxboro was the last stop before the girls flew home to California. Some of their other stops were: the Everglades and Walt Disney World; Amish country; Washington, D.C.; New York City and Maine. While in Massachusetts, the girls visited the Lowell Mills, Plymouth Plantation and enjoyed a tour of Boston.

During the trip, no electronics or cell phones are permitted. The only communication the girls have with their families is via mail. There are two mail stops, one in Pennsylvania and the other in Maine.

According to the chaperones, some of the life lessons the girls learn is how to budget their money, how to do their own laundry and lots of practice with people skills. The older students coach and help the younger students.

The girls arrived home with almost a month to rest up before they go back to school. In their hands they will carry books and school supplies. In their minds they will reflect upon the life lessons. In their hearts they will treasure miles and miles of memories.

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