

# Making a smoother world



Katherine Frey/Journal

Little Friends for Peace participant Kelly Korpel gives the Earth a hug during a camp game. The camp's young attendees discussed ways to keep the world a peaceful place.

## Campers set out to learn finer points of peacemaking

By **JEANNE DEWEY**  
Journal staff writer

**M**erin Riley, 11, balked at attending summer camp with little kids, but her mother gave her no choice in the matter.

The sixth-grader's reluctance was written all over her face when she showed up at Little Friends for Peace, a weeklong day camp at which kids from toddler age to 14 practiced peacemaking skills.

"When she first came in, she went like this," said Jennie Andrews, 10, as she plopped into a chair, slumped down, folded her arms and scowled. Andrews, Merin's co-camper, conceded she had felt the same way.

It wasn't long, though, before reluctant campers Merin and Jennie, and two dozen more kids in last week's camp at Holy Family Church in Mitchelville, were drawn into activities, games and songs, all aimed at making kids feel good about

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Mary Joan Park  
Little Friends for Peace founder

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themselves so they'll spread the feeling around.

Merin learned a bad attitude is not peaceful. She also learned some ways to avoid arguments with her sisters: Stop, think, talk about it.

"My sisters and I fight at least once a day," explained Merin, who lives in Bowie and hopes to have fewer disagreements with her siblings. "My mom will say, 'Remember what you learned in peace camp.'"

Mount Rainier resident Mary Joan Park started Little Friends for Peace in her family's basement in Minnesota 11 years ago and transplanted it here in 1988. They hold the non-denominational camp and seminars for adults throughout the Washington area.

"Kids are just starving for more peace in their lives," said Park, a former teacher who has six kids. "I have kids in five different county schools, and I'm very distressed at the stuff they pick up in schools."

Through cooperative games and conflict resolution exercises, Park said children become peacemakers.

"We shouldn't hide the word 'peace,' just because it was associated with the [anti-war movement in the] '60s," Park said. "I'm talking about peace in our lives. I really hope we can get to the point where we focus on this element for a portion of each day in school."

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