

This is a note that I posted to the National Storytelling Network's Interfaith Discussion Group Listserv. It tells quite a bit about our day.

Dear All,

Thanks to some of you for writing and asking me how our Children at the Well community event went. It turned out to be a wonderful afternoon! There were three parts to our time together.

The first was our **formal** storytelling program which was held in the sanctuary of a United Methodist Church. It was a space that leant itself to interfaith telling, simply adorned, warm wood tones, good acoustics, etc.

Thirteen Hindu, Jewish, Christian and Muslim youth (6th-9th graders who had attended 6 coaching sessions given by storytellers Mary Murphy (a listserv member) and Marni Gillard) shared wisdom tales from their traditions. Their tellings ranged from quite sophisticated 8-10 minute tellings, to rather simple 2-4 tales.

Each telling, in its own way, was special. Best of all, the audience received each student's efforts and abilities as a gift. There was much pride and a sense of accomplishment on the part of the students, their coaches and parents, and great admiration from their families, friends and those who attended from the broader community. There was also a very positive response to the process and the power of storytelling itself, especially from those who had not attended a telling before.

After the formal telling (attended by approximately 110 people) we encouraged people to join us in the adjoining Fellowship Hall for the **second part of our program**..to have finger foods, to join in a mixer activity and to enjoy a Hindu Story Dance which turned out to be a wonderful addition to our program. It was performed by the ten year old daughter of a teacher who attended our storytelling workshop at the Hindu temple... Ninety five people stayed for this part of the program.

The mixer, a Human Treasure Hunt which we adapted from the ones used by Bob Kanegis and Liz Miguel at their FEAST dinners was a hit!! Almost everyone joined in, but the children particularly loved it. My eleven year old grandson attended and as a result of filling in his card, he met two Muslim, two Hindu and one Jewish adult along with some children his own age who were also of other faiths. He thought it was cool!!

Before **the third part of our program, the pot luck meal and informal story sharing** (about 90 people participated), we had a Muslim, Christian and Jewish teacher and a Hindu father lead us in a grace from each of their traditions.

Seeing Children and adults from so many different cultures and faiths sharing table fellowship and stories made all our work on this project worthwhile. At the end of the afternoon we asked people to complete the statement "Just wanted you to know..." Here are some of the comments we received...

"As a now storyteller, I think that the grant was well spent. I learned a lot and I am fairly certain that everyone benefited also." (a 7th grade student)

"God bless you in your efforts to fix the broken souls and spirits amongst us. The world needs this!"

"Enlightening community experience!"

It was a great interfaith event. One of the best I have ever been to. The involvement of the children made it very special."

"I wish we had more programs like this around the community and the world. Although we are different in religion, we are all the same in heart."

"Excellent afternoon. Beautiful, "moving" stories. Interesting project.
Applause! Applause! Applause!

"I REALLY enjoyed this program. I thought it was very fun and interesting to learn about different traditions. I had lots of fun! (6th grade student)

"I had a wonderful time telling. I hope that I continue to tell! (7th grade student)

"It was a great idea to have children from different faiths to express themselves and get closer to other children of their age. I loved to see them sitting together, laughing and having a great time, as the adults did."

"The storytelling was great. Amazing stories. I loved it!"

"As always..."a little child shall lead them".....there are so few opportunities for adults and children from different cultures to come together.
Thank you for creating this opportunity."