

Bismillah,

In the name of God  
How beautiful!  
Thank you.  
Islah  
mom of Alaudeen  
salaams  
(Peace)

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Dear Students,

We wanted to let you know that we are so proud of all of you! Each one of you followed through on your commitment to our project and worked, as Marni would say, "to make your stories shine".

And they did! Many people commented on how well you told them, on how much they liked the fact that your stories were "a good mix"; from the very serious to the laugh out loud funny! Each story in its own way did have sparks of light and wisdom to share and the way you told them let people know just how unique and special you are.

But, those of us involved in the project already knew that! You have, in so many ways been a Blessing and a Joy and FUN to work with.

We have learned much from being with you and are impressed with your knowledge and love for your own religious traditions and your curiosity and respect for the religions of the other students in your group. You are wonderful role models for bringing about peace in our world.

It is our hope and our prayer that you will carry your knowledge of the art and power of storytelling and of your increased understanding of other religions with you always, using it not only for your own benefit, but for the benefit of all those whose lives you will touch.

Peace, Shalom, Ahimsa, Asalaam

"Let's peace together our world" (Itah Banda, age 8)

Gert Johnson, Paula Weiss, Marni Gillard and Mary Murphy

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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."

"They all did a great job! They were confident, well-prepared and sincere."

"I thought today's performance was spectacular. The children's stories were well thought out and presented. Hopefully, they all learned from this experience."

"They were really, really good!"

"The event today was very enlightening. It is amazing how passionate kids are when taught well...the stories were very well told!"

"What a wonderful experience. The stories were very good and helped me to have a better understanding of just how many ways we are the same."

"The kids were great! I was impressed with their selection of stories. It was nice to read about them in the program. Keep up the good work!"

"I am impressed and grateful for the gifts shared by the young storytellers! What a great idea-small ways to make huge changes."

"The children were delightful!!! Very well prepared also."

"The young tellers were ALL very good."