

Falls church teaches youths Bible and cooking lessons



BY KAREN CARR KEEFE

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PHOTOS BY TOM STEVENS

Colonial Heights Free Methodist Church has reached out to youths this summer with two special programs: Vacation Bible School (VBS) – and cooking.

And one program was an outgrowth of the other, as gifts of groceries to families of VBS students led to the kids learning some basic cooking skills.

The “Kids Can Cook” program

was presented this past Saturday, and Vacation Bible School was held July 11-13.

At Vacation Bible School, the lessons centered on a study of the Book of Daniel and the lesson that “God is with you,” said Family Ministries Director Rachel Stevens. The kids ranged in age from 2 to 14 or 15.

She said they took the kids on an imaginary trip to Hawaii as the setting.

“Our first night was Daniel and

his friends being captured ... and how they refused to eat the king’s food,” Stevens said. “Day 2 was our volcano night. We had Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace, so we took a little liberty there, and instead of a furnace we put them in a volcano. And Day 3 was Daniel being saved from the lion, and how God is with us when life is scary.”

Along with the Bible study, there also were songs, a luau and other creative activities.

The church, at 1310 Saunders Settlement Road, Niagara Falls, brought two of its VBS classes back to its roots in the inner city. One evening, VBS was held at Gluck Park, near where the church originally was located, at Weston Avenue and 15th Street. Another was held at Gill Creek Park on Niagara Street. A third was held in the Town of Niagara.

Stevens explains that, at the close of the VBS program, kids are given blessings bags with groceries to take home to their families.

“It’s actually something that God has been laying on my heart for several years,” Stevens said. “As we were handing (the blessings bags) out, I would look inside, and there would be some prepared products, but there would also be ingredients, such as rice and beans ... and it got me wondering, ‘Do they know what to do with these whole food



Clockwise: From left, Donna Stevens, Sophie Deloretto and Anessa Kraft cook a meal in the kitchen at Colonial Heights Free Methodist Church, 1310 Saunders Settlement Road, Niagara Falls. • Cheryl Vail gives a cooking lesson to Anessa Kraft. • Kenny O’Brian cuts some vegetables in the “Kids Can Cook” class offered by Colonial Heights Free Methodist Church. • Maria Heist helps Ian Heist in meal preparation.

items?” And it went along with the food insecurity that we were seeing.”

“It’s so much cheaper and healthier if you are able to know how to manipulate whole foods ... and the health benefits that go along with it. So that’s where the kids cooking program stemmed from,” Stevens said.

“If they could just learn some basic skills in the kitchen, it would open up a whole world for them. ... The fun aspect is

just a bonus. They are enjoying it, I think, but getting a lot of feedback from the parents. We already had reports from a mom who said her son made dinner for the family on Sunday following our recipes!”

Stevens said she hopes to bring the “Kids Can Cook” program off-site from the church property, just like they do with VBS, so that it’s a little more accessible to kids in the city.

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