

# A respite for WTC families



Photos by Peter Carr/The Journal News

Danielle Tartaro, 6, of Bridgewater, N.J., dances with streamers yesterday during an exercise at VISIONS Vacation Camp for the Blind in Ramapo. Families of 9/11 victims took part in the program to continue the healing process after the terrorist attacks.

## With song, drama, dance, participants work for healing

Andrea Rubin  
The Journal News

RAMAPO — Karen Reilly and her three children spent yesterday morning singing and dancing and planned to spend the afternoon learning how to juggle and walk on stilts.

"My kids are having a great time," Reilly, of Bridgewater, N.J., said. "It's an interesting program."

Reilly, whose husband was killed in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, was one of about 40 people spending the weekend at VISIONS Vacation Camp for the Blind in a program designed to help the families continue the healing process.

The weekend, which began Friday night and will finish today, was financed by Lions Clubs International and was free



Jose Cardona, 6, of the Bronx performs in an evil warlord mask during a dance workshop at the camp yesterday.

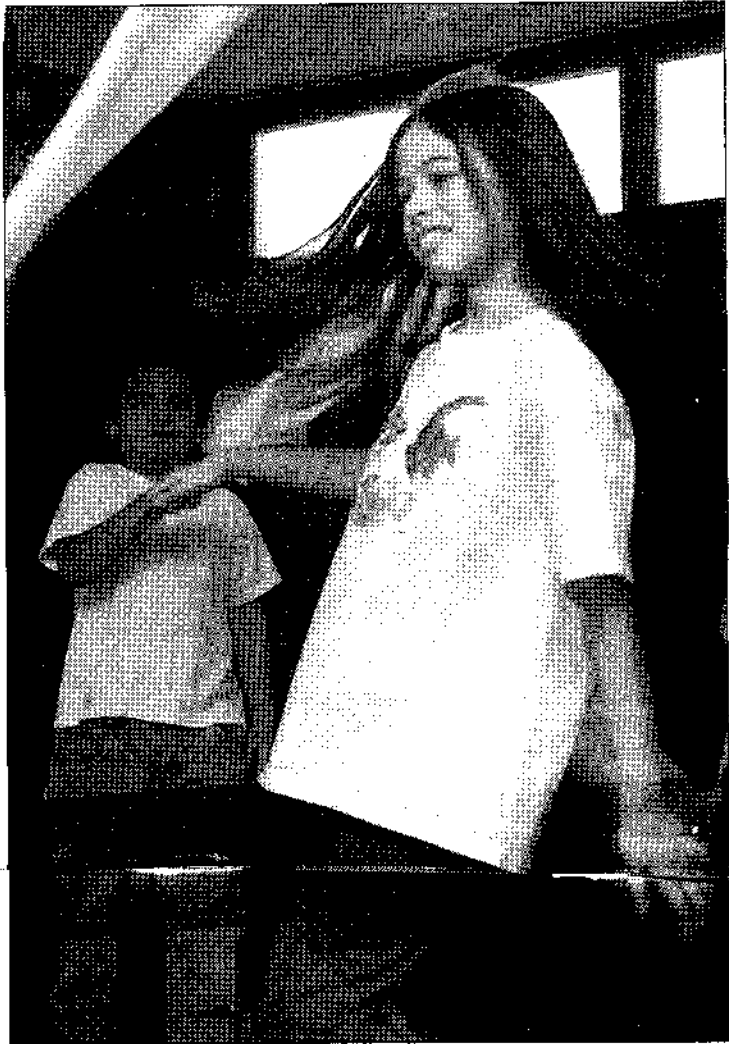
for the participants. Campers participated in art therapy programs such as drama, music, dance and even circus training.

"We use the arts as a tool for healing," said Patrick Sciaratta, executive director of the Friendship Ambassadors Foundation, which runs the event. "We try to give the people who were tragi-

cally affected by 9/11 a more useful way of looking at the world."

The families were referred to the Friendship Ambassadors program through organizations such as the American Red Cross and Tuesday's Children. All the

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Photos by Peter Carr/The Journal News  
Jose Cardona, 6, of the Bronx, left, and Alana Tartaro, 8, of Bridgewater, N.J., perform during a dance workshop at VISIONS Vacation Camp yesterday.

# WTC kin are treated to weekend of healing

HEALING, from 1B

participants were affected by the terrorist attacks, whether they lost family members or jobs.

Counselors are on hand if needed, but Joanna Sherman of Bond Street Theater, which teaches the campers circus skills, said most of the weekend's focus is on helping the families feel good about themselves.

"They're not thinking about their problems. We can get them to do things that they didn't think they could do," she said. "It's really about feeling empowered. It's just a step to feeling better about themselves."

James Young of Cortlandt was the disc jockey who led the group in a dance party.

"It's very enjoyable. The whole idea is not to rehash, not to drag them through it again," he said. "It's a celebration of life."

The participants also learn a lot about other cultures, said Bill Vanaver of the Vanaver Caravan, which taught the group different dances. He said the dances and songs the participants learn this weekend all come from different backgrounds.

"It's a way of relating to the idea of community and a way of relating to questions of cultural differences in a positive way," Vanaver said. "We get so much from the other side. This is more of a positive feeling about cultural variety, of cultural expression."

The campers performed a hula, a samba, a Chinese dance and a Brazilian dance. They also learned an Indian poem using hand movements that expressed the wish for peace.

Reilly said she would perform some of the dances learned this weekend with her children at home. She said she also was planning to teach the children's movement teacher some of the dances.

"It's a unique program," she said, adding that her children were really enjoying it. "There's music, there's dancing, there's nice people."

Soraya Cardona, a Bronx resi-



Aridely Ortiz, 15, of the Bronx, walks on stilts during a theater workshop at the camp. Ortiz and other campers received instruction in circus skills from Manhattan's Bond Street Theater.

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Joanna Sherman,  
Bond Street Theater

dent who lost her first husband in the World Trade Center attack, said the weekend was relaxing. She said the loss of her ex-husband, the father of two of her children, was particularly difficult for her 13-year-old daughter, Sasha.

"It was too much for her," she said. "But she's having fun."

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