

# Lifestyle

SOUTH FLORIDA SUN-SENTINEL | WEDNESDAY | JULY 9, 2003 | SECTION E

**The Culture Camp program "is all about peace through play, teaching tolerance, teaching cooperation, exposing youngsters to other cultures and environments."**

— CHRISTINE BATES,  
URBAN LEAGUE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR



ON TOP OF DOWN UNDER: Tiffany Kelly, 8, listens to the day's lesson on the customs and culture of Australia at the Urban League's summer camp in Fort Lauderdale. The camp's cultural component is designed to teach kids appreciation of other cultures through music, games, stories and food. The background wall contains the children's hand-crafts along with flags of other nations. Staff photos/Susan Stocker

# On top of the world

Culture Camp is a summer program that gives children a chance to learn about — and understand — people in other countries.



**PASSPORT TO UNDERSTANDING:** Children at Culture Camp receive passports that they fill with cultural information on different countries.

BY MARGO HARAKAS  
STAFF WRITER

Didn't matter that Christine Bates was an ADULT. Didn't matter that she was a VIP, more important even than the Urban League's camp counselors. May in fact be why the waist-high straight talker singled her out.

Walked right up to her on the Pine Ridge Alternative Center campus in Fort Lauderdale, looked her in the eye, and in a voice he might have used to correct a younger sibling said, "Miss Bates, we're going to have to fix this."

"Well, what do you mean?" Bates responded, her interest aroused.

"I'm *not* supposed to learn during summer," said the boy, a camper in the Urban League's summer program.

Bates, youth development director for



**LET'S MAKE A NOSE HERE:** Damon Northern, 8, gets help from Culture Camp creator Judith Keiser during a lesson about Australia in which Urban League campers made models of koalas with dough.

■ CAMP CONTINUES ON 6E

# Program seeks to promote intercultural understanding

## CAMP

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the Urban League of Broward County, tried to stifle a laugh. She talked about how learning is all around us, how deciphering the mysteries of the world can be fun, even in a summer camp, how knowledge is power, and . . . She finally just said, "We'll get this right for you next year."

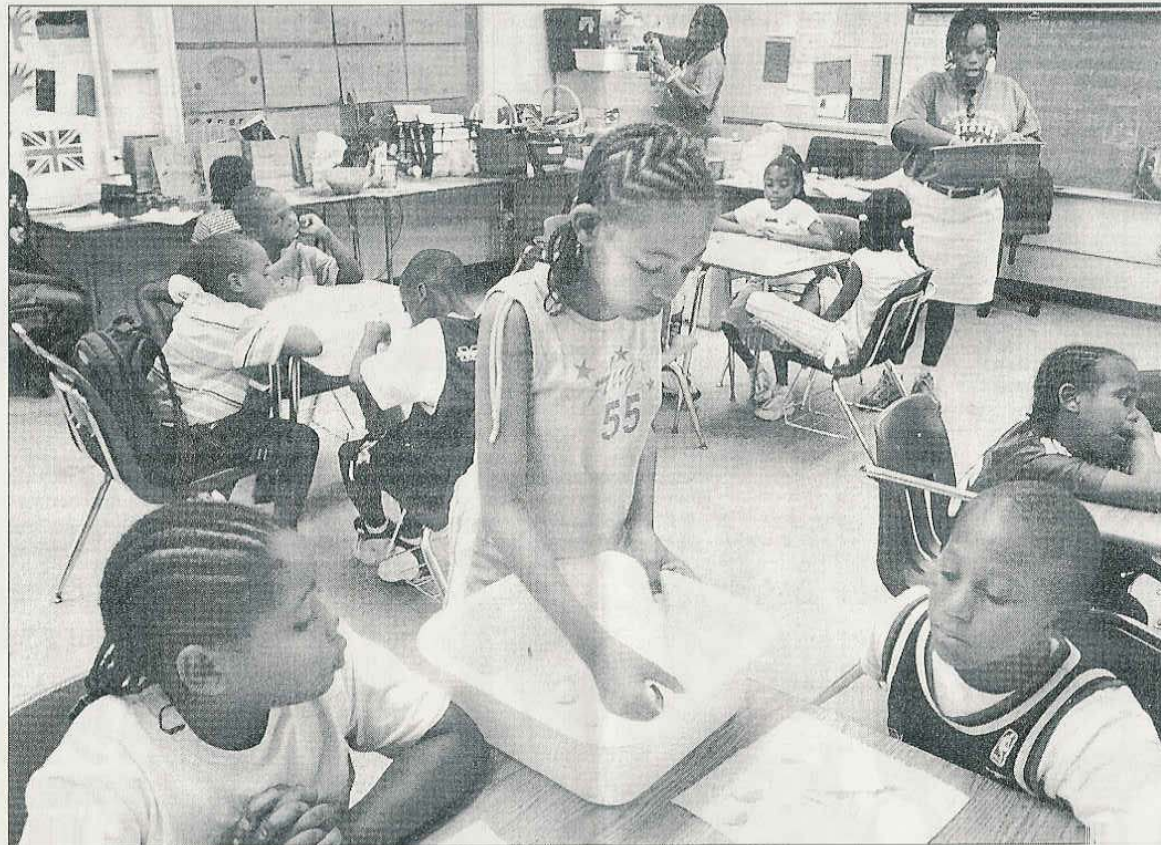
Couple of days later, the same boy spotted her and in a grunt of unmistakable approval indicated this culture thing wasn't so bad after all.

What he didn't know was that the inspiration for the cultural camp came from a 7-year-old boy named William, who's been obsessed with geography since he was 3. His mother, Judith Keiser, created the cultural camp curriculum.

William first learned the names of countries by doing puzzle maps at his Montessori school. He discovered still other lands, their locations and the sound and rhythm of their music from the Talking Globe his grandmother gave him. And from the age of 5, whenever on a car or boat trip, he'd ask to play the geography game.

"Let's start with the letter he'd say, then quickly jump with "Zaire."

Give him an A, and even he'd shoot back: Albania, Armenia, Andorra, Afghanistan, Austria, Australia, Azerba



**ERIALS:** Maritza Valle, 11, hands out dough to fellow Urban League campers Juanita Scott, 6, and Nathaniel Dele make dough koalas for a lesson about Australia. Staff photo/Susan Stocker

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Keiser found hope, and a

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Keiser taught the counselors

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up at home.

A Coroboree festival wraps up the Australian sojourn. It's an occasion to break out the flutes and drums again, and for the children to paint their faces Aborigine style.

"We were looking for something that focuses on reading with hands-on type activities," says Bates. Keiser's program fit the bill on several fronts. "Judy's curriculum is all about peace through play, teaching tolerance, teaching cooperation, exposing youngsters to other cultures and environments. It comes at a time when we have so much going on in the world."

When Keiser's Culture Camp gets under way later this month, it will be a half-day program, followed by organized group outings with parents to cultural destinations such as museums, places of worship and ethnic restaurants. And each Friday, in keeping with the theme, the Unitarian Universalist Church will host a festival complete with appropriate food and entertainment.

Keiser would love to see her curriculum adopted by the public schools. She can see this, in fact, becoming her life's work.

"This is emotionally satisfying in a way law was not," she says. "I think I can do some good in my own small way. It's a small idea, but a large cause . . . helping to create a world worth living in."

