

Camp Glow elicits joy

By Elizabeth Lowe

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SPARKS - Laura Piatania isn't spending her summer vacation at the beach or traveling to an exotic destination.

The 27-year-old Anne Arundel County public school counselor is serving as a volunteer at Camp GLOW, a series of four residential summer camps for Baltimore-area adults with special needs.

"People will say it's not a vacation, but it is," said Piatania, a parishioner of St. Bernadette in Severn. "It's a week away from the world. It's rejuvenating. You learn so much from all the campers."

While Piatania is a returning volunteer at Camp GLOW (God Loves Our World), Justin Hull is a new camp volunteer.

"There's a great energy," said the 30-year-old St. John the Evangelist, Severna Park, parishioner less than 24 hours after arriving at camp. "They (the campers) are all so joyful. They give you that same energy."

Bernie Schmidt, a returning camper, grinned as he talked about camp.

"I love it," said Schmidt, 54, who worships at St. Isaac Jogues in Carney. "I have so much fun."

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Schmidt said he enjoys meeting new people and seeing wildlife around the retreat house.

"It makes my day," he said.

Deacon Bill Fleming, director of the Archdiocese of Baltimore's Office of Disabilities Ministry and director of Camp GLOW, said campers give everyone the same welcome, whether it's Archbishop William E. Lori or a lay visitor.

"It's a level playing field," Deacon Fleming said. "It keeps you humble. I love that."

Camp GLOW includes nature walks, a talent show, daily prayer services or Mass and arts and crafts.

At camp July 14, markers, crayons, construction paper, glue, paint brushes, paint, beads and wooden crosses littered tables as campers completed various projects.

Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, auxiliary bishop of Baltimore who has been named the ninth bishop of the Diocese of Springfield, Mass., and will be installed Aug. 12 in Springfield, celebrated Mass at camp July 14.

In his homily, Bishop Rozanski highlighted the day's Gospel reading.

“The best gift we can bring to him (God) is ourselves,” he said. “As we celebrate Camp Glow, we ask God to give us that grace we need to respond to him.”

The first session of Camp Glow was June 8-13 at the Monsignor O’Dwyer Retreat House in Sparks. The second session is July 13-18 and the third session is scheduled for Aug. 3-8, both at the retreat house. Camp GLOW West is scheduled for Aug. 19-22 in Accident.

The camp is funded through the archbishop’s Annual Appeal, parishes, Knights of Columbus councils, businesses and individuals. Each session costs about \$20,000, Fleming said.

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