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## Helping kids just say ' om'

### Youngsters learn Hindu culture at this summer camp.

By Daryl Bell  
*Staff Writer*

(July 26, 2003) — MACEDON — The Hindu Heritage Summer Camp here takes summer fun to a level that's intellectually, culturally and spiritually rewarding.

The camp, which is in a second session that began on July 20 and ends Aug. 2, is being held at the India Community Center, 2171 Monroe Wayne County Line Road.

The first session, with 76 youngsters ages 8 to 15, ran from July 6 to July 19 and was sold out.

"This is the first time that we've run a second session, so we're very excited about it," Dr. Padmanabh Kamath, secretary for Hindu Heritage Summer Camp Inc., a nonprofit organization.

"We've only got 29 (youngsters) for the second session, but at the rate we're going, that number will more than likely double next year."

Why is Kamath so confident? It's because in the Indian community, the camp fills a need and is extremely popular.

For \$750 a session, youngsters not only get the opportunity to bunk down in the great outdoors but are introduced to Hinduism, the principal and most ancient religious tradition in India.

Don't confuse the camp with a religious retreat. While the youngsters, who come from all over the country, are introduced to Hinduism, they're also able to relate to peers.

In short, they discover what it means to be a Hindu American.

"I've met so many friends here," said Tara Parthasarathi, a 15-year-old from Fairport who has attended the summer camp with her sister Anjali, 13, for the past five years. "Here, we meet people who have something in common with us. You



SHAWN DOWD staff photographer

Prachi Vidwans, 11, second from right, practices with her group on Friday to learn a dance for an upcoming talent show at the Hindu Heritage Summer Camp in Macedon. The camp, now in its second session this year, runs through Aug. 2.

[\[Day in Photos\]](#)

look forward to coming here.”

Added Anjali: “ We learn a lot about our culture, but it’s not like (a classroom). It’s really a lot of fun coming here.”

Fun is one of the reasons why the camp was founded in the first place.

According to Kamath, in addition to the traditional camp settings featuring campfires, the youngsters study Hindu philosophy and principle, meditation and yoga.

Kamath said the camp was formed in Stroudsburg, Pa., in 1976. Devi Parvati, a founding member of the camp, relocated it to Rochester in 1991.

Parvati is presently the camp’s spiritual adviser and has trained several camp veterans to assume leadership roles. One of those veterans is camp director Rajesh Agarwal.

“ The camp is open to anyone who wants to come,” Agarwal said. “ We’ve had people come in and participate in the program who were not necessarily interested in Hindu but wanted to find out more about us and our culture. They were warmly welcomed and received.”

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