

SUMMER CAMPS

Energy From Nature

If you weren't looking for it, you would probably drive right past the modest gravel road that is the entrance to Verdun Adventure Bound. Just north of Rixeyville, on State Route 229, it is like one of those unremarkable-looking restaurants you later learn has the best food around.

The one-lane road winds past trees, grassy knolls — once the grazing fields of cows when the property was a dairy farm back in the 1960's — and freshly painted red outbuildings and barns. Then, you see the crown jewels: An expansive education building called Eagle's Nest, a commercial-sized teaching greenhouse, an apiary filled with beehives, a riotously colored children's discovery garden, a fenced vegetable patch, a

The young artists use a portion of each day engaged in recreational and outdoor experiences — team building, ropes courses, kayaking, swimming, or quietly observing nature. The remainder of their time is devoted to the serious endeavor of making art under the tutelage of a talented professional staff. Sally Pont, the dean of students at Highland School in Warrenton and a published author, works with the writers; Jeff Walker, a professional Shakespearean actor and drama teacher at Eastern View High School in Culpeper, teaches theatre. Two nationally exhibited artists mentor the painters and sculptors in the group. Painter Laurie Marshall, who once taught art in Rappahannock County and now teaches in Marin County, California, returns for her second year at Verdun. Harriett Cortez, a sculptor from New Orleans, kicks off a new class this year — Sculpture with Found Objects — a reflection of Verdun's commitment to sustainable practices.

"We stage the Arts Retreat for several reasons," Verdun's founder, Dr. David Snyder, explains. "There are few day camp opportunities for older teenagers in the Piedmont area. It is exactly those young people whom Verdun is trying to reach. And in the context of the camp, we are seeking youth who have either a true talent or a tremendous passion for the arts. We would like to think of ourselves as an incubator for promising young artists as well as art patrons."

What makes this summer camp even more unusual is that Verdun brings the group together throughout the year for special events like theatre outings and gallery tours so that friends can keep in touch and continue to share their love of the arts. For more information, send e-mail to karenallen@commoffice.com or download the Arts Retreat brochure and application at www.verdunadventurebound.org.

— KAREN ALLEN



Enriching artistic talents....

pristine pond for canoeing and kayaking, an outdoor amphitheater, miles of running and hiking trails, a Native American village, low ropes and high ropes courses that include a dizzyingly high climbing wall and 1,000-foot zip line.

Such is the setting for Verdun's Arts Retreat, a unique, week-long camp July 13-18 designed for up to 60 teens who possess a strong interest in drama, writing, or visual arts. Concentrating on this year's theme, "Drawing Energy From Nature," the 13-to-18-year-olds plan to spend an intensive week enriching their artistic talents through self-discovery while they explore the 75-acre Verdun campus.

LOCAL AUTHORS

Springtime Signals
Festival of the Book

"I got Boyd into this," former U.S. Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize-winner Rita Dove explained on stage, a stunning vision in red. "Boyd just snuck into the poem!" The audience — a packed house at Charlottesville's Paramount Theater — erupted in laughs, a frequent occurrence during an electrifying event: the 99th program in the 15th annual Virginia Festival of the Book, in March.

This particular Festival event, called "Another Music: An Evening with Rita Dove and Boyd Tinsley," introduced Dove's new book to the world.

In *Sonata Mulattica*, Dove actually calls out Boyd Tinsley, violinist for the Dave Matthews Band, by name. Born and raised in Charlottesville, Boyd Tinsley is a classically-trained violinist (gone electric), and thus the perfect co-host for an evening celebrating Dove's book about the 19th Century violinist George Bridgetower, the son of a white Polish woman and an "African Prince." With grace and wit, the local author read aloud poems from her book, before Tinsley played an original song for a rapt audience. The two then sat together in conversation to discuss the creative process.

Inspired by history, Dove's lyric narrative tells the story of the musician whom Beethoven called "my lunatic mulatto." The virtuoso traveled widely — from London's royal court to Vienna — where Beethoven named a sonata after him. But after this shining moment, Bridgetower vanished from memory. Exactly what happened during the epic encounter between composer and musician is what intrigued Dove, as she traced Bridgetower's tale across Europe, and even dragged her family to London "to walk his spaces" and see where he passed his final moment on earth. Dove is an "astonishing poet" — to quote Robert Vaughan, president of the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities — and to hear her poetry read aloud is to hear language as music.

—MARY WINSTON NICKLIN



Rita Dove, poet.