

Time out for fun



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

ABOVE: Joshua Stage enjoys an uneasy truce with a chicken at Camp Rewood Glen's small animal farm. **BELOW:** Mike Valdez, right, gives Malik Rivers a hand during a steep portion of an afternoon hike at Camp Redwood Glen.

Camp a respite for soldiers' kids

By **KURTIS ALEXANDER**
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✓ SCOTTS VALLEY — It's not unusual for summer camp to induce a mild case of homesickness, even in the bravest children.

But when a camper's parents are on active military duty and their next correspondence remains largely uncertain, the jitters run deeper.

"I'm worried about my dad," said Malik Rivers, 9, who is spending most of the next week at Camp Redwood Glen while his father, with the U.S. Air Force, is away someplace beyond Malik's budding geographic vocabulary.

"I know that there are more terrorists there, and they kill people," he said.

Malik, with a cherubic grin and frame he's yet to grow into, is one of 45 kids from Edwards Air Force Base, in the Southern California desert, spending five days in the cooler Santa Cruz Mountains. The kids will practice archery, go swimming and sleep in a log cabin — keep-



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ing the realities of the war on terrorism out of their young minds.

There may even be pillow fights or sleeping hands dipped in glasses of warm water or toothpaste smeared on bed sheets.

Counselors wearing Superman shirts, one even wearing a red cape, went right to work entertaining campers as they arrived Wednesday, greeting them with song and dance in the rec hall.

"We're hoping this will be a fun time for them, and they'll get away from the stresses they're experiencing," said camp director Mark Morton, who has been with Camp Redwood Glen for six years.

Never before has the camp hosted three busloads of military kids, Morton said, let alone during wartime.

"It's a blessing," he added.

The camp is provided at no expense to the group, owing to the hospitality of the Salvation Army, which has owned and operated Redwood Glen since 1946.

The nonprofit is partnered with the Lilly Foundation in a national effort to address the needs of families of military personnel deployed to Iraq or on other overseas missions.

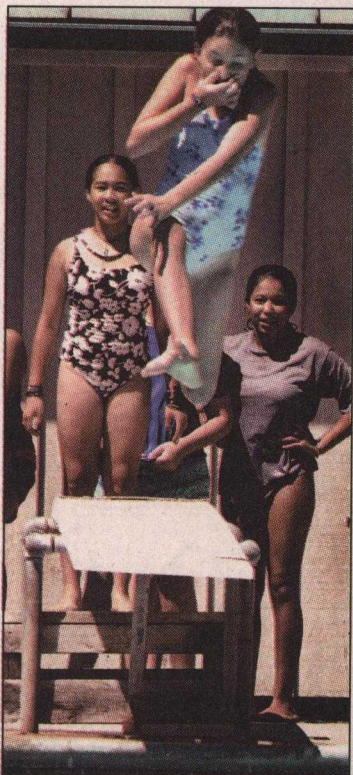
James Clark, 11, whose formal posture and polite speech have all the markings of a military base, says his dad is in South Korea. The last time he saw his father was four months ago.

"He'll be OK," James said, confidently. "When he gets back, we're going to go fishing."

In the meantime, James looks forward to spending the weekend playing soccer and baseball and spending time with others his age.

The kids from Edwards join about 100 other children ages 6 to 12 who participate in one of the camp's six summer sessions.

One of the chaperones with the group for Edwards is Sgt. Chris Wiles, who recently returned from



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

A camper heads for the cool of the pool at Camp Redwood Glen.

duty in Saudi Arabia and knows how hard it is to spend time away from family.

"The worst things about being over there is not having family contact, (it's) worse than the shooting," he said.

Wiles served as "security guard" on the border of Iraq, noting that a distant second to missing his family were the hardships of sniper fire and sandstorms.

Wiles' son, Pierce, 9, who was preparing to spend his first night in a log cabin, says he's glad his dad has returned safely and things are back to normal.

"I just hope I get the top bunk," he said.

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