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## A Midsummer Night's Kid Fest

By Lou Fancher



Young lord Ethan Monk watches as his father is knighted by the Queen Photo provided authenticity was everywhere.

That Upshaw tradition continues today. "James Gillerman, who specializes in Renaissance music, teaches the children singing and to play the recorder," she begins. "We have Morris dances, juggling with oranges, and jousting with pillows," she continues. Sensing a slip on the authenticity meter, she explains: "You stand opposite each other and at the strike of a bell, you try to knock each other off of two feet. It's all in good fun...and no one gets hurt with pillows."

"The joy is in seeing the children really embrace the Renaissance era," she says, as the conversation moves on. A favorite part of the closing ceremony happens when children bring their parents to be knighted by "The Queen." Volunteers, some of whom attended the camp as children, play various supporting roles, bring food, and help with costume construction.

This year, there are students from Ecuador, Salvador, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Germany, Norway, France, England, Scotland and the United States. "We are having each student repeat 'All the World's a Stage!' in their native language," she explains. Upshaw believes the children learn from the quotes they memorize. "They remember the quotations that become of value to them-especially his words about relationships and families: how they get along, or not." On a warm evening in mid-July, her garden is full of laughter and lingering. Time, in this instance, creeps pleasurably.

Next year's camp will run from July 11-22. Reach Carol Upshaw at (925) 284-7974.

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Carol Upshaw's Lafayette garden was filled with play and pretend with a purpose on Friday, July 16th.

The former high school English teacher and current director of the Shakespeare for Kids summer program has led young lords and ladies through the wonderland of outdoor renaissance theater for twenty-six seasons. Friday was the culmination and celebration of this year's camp with a Tudor Faire, Feast, and Dramatic Production.

The two-week program for children, ages 6-14, was first inspired by Upshaw's experience at a Renaissance Faire and Madge Lorwin's book, *Will's Feast*. "I thought, what could be better than Shakespeare and birthdays?" she says. Planning the menu was a treat and 26 years later, she has no problem recalling the meal: Roast Suckling Pig, Pasties, and Cock-a-Leekie. "That's chicken soup with leeks and a touch of lemon," she rattles off, exerting considerable effort to stop herself from giving the complete recipe.

Upshaw's enthusiasm for The Bard bubbles, even in a phone interview. "People were invited to come and emote," she says about the first gathering. "They chose characters; some people even dressed up." This was a party given by an English teacher, and